



SAFEGUARDING IMPROVEMENT TASK & FINISH GROUP FINAL REPORT

*Working for
Warwickshire*

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1.0 Introduction

1.1 Executive Summary

In November 2011, Ofsted undertook a statutory inspection of Warwickshire County Council's safeguarding and looked after children (LAC) services. The inspectors made a judgement of "good" for the effectiveness of service, with capacity to improve.

Specifically, 20 areas for improvement were identified. Officers from the service formulated an Action Plan to address these, identifying the actions required, the agency responsible, a timescale for completion and how the improvement would be measured.

In March 2012, the Overview & Scrutiny Board commissioned a Task & Finish Group to monitor the progress of this Action Plan to ensure it was being implemented in a timely and suitable manner.

1.2 Members and Contributors

Cllr Bob Hicks (Chair)
Cllr Peter Balaam
Cllr Carolyn Robbins
Cllr June Tandy
Cllr Sid Tooth

Kim Brandrick, Carer, Warwickshire Fostering Service
Judy Dyson, Carer, Warwickshire Fostering Service
Elaine Finnerty, Carer, Warwickshire Fostering Service

Jenny Butlin-Moran, Service Manager, Safeguarding, WCC
Phil Sawbridge, Head of Service, Safeguarding, WCC
Billy Webster, HR Service Centre Manager, WCC
Brenda Vincent, Service Manager, Safeguarding, WCC
Jacqueline Barnes, Director of Nursing, Arden Cluster
Jackie Channell, Designated Nurse for Child Protection, Arden Cluster
Richard Maybey, Democratic Services Officer, WCC

1.3 Evidence Used

- Practical demonstration of case-file recording system
- Practical demonstration of case-file audit procedure
- Case-file audit checklists used by managers
- Senior Leadership Team report: "Case File Recording Audits, July-December 2010"
- Verbal evidence on matters relating to:
 - HR procedures
 - Child protection
 - Health provision
 - Support for LAC

1.4 Dates and Timescales

5 April – scoping meeting

8 May – evidence gathering for Safeguarding-related actions

14 May – evidence for Health-related actions

21 May – evidence for LAC-related actions

30 May – agreement of content for interim report

6 December – final evidence gathering for outstanding actions and update on overall progress

1.5 Recommendations

- 1. To endorse the overall conclusion of the Task & Finish Group that the Safeguarding Action Plan is being implemented and monitored in a satisfactory manner**
- 2. To encourage the children’s services teams from Warwickshire and Coventry to work towards a common approach to sharing child protection information with University Hospital Coventry and Warwickshire**
- 3. To consider and agree any actions that might be necessary as a result of the observations outlined in section 3 of the report**

2.0 History of the Review

2.1 Scoping meeting (1)

We met with officers to receive background information about the inspection and the intentions behind the Action Plan, and to define the purpose and parameters of the review using the Council's Scoping Document (appendix A).

Phil Sawbridge (Head of Service, Safeguarding) explained that the inspection was a dual inspection from both Ofsted and the Care Quality Commission, with the latter undertaking perhaps less methodical and evidence-based analysis than the former. Consequently, some of the inspection findings and areas for improvement were surprising, given the overall strong rating that the service received.

We asked officers which of the 20 areas for improvement (see appendix F) they thought were a priority, and which were less important. Based on the feedback, we agreed not to pursue Areas for Improvement 5 and 10.

The ambition was for the review to be a short and sharp exercise, to be completed over four further weekly meetings. The first three meetings would be themed to allow focused scrutiny of specific topics (safeguarding, health, LAC), with a final meeting to agree findings and recommendations. The aim was to take a report to the Children and Young People Overview and Scrutiny Committee on 20 June 2012.

2.2 Safeguarding meeting (2)

This meeting considered Areas for Improvement 3, 4, 6 and 8.

For Area 3, Jenny Butlin-Moran (Service Manager, Safeguarding) presented the checklists used by managers when undertaking case-file audits and gave a practical demonstration of how this would be done on the CareFirst electronic case-file recording system. For areas 4 and 6, Jenny provided a verbal update.

For Area 8, Billy Webster (HR Service Centre Manager) explained that Ofsted wanted more emphasis on employment files being held centrally, rather than stored locally with managers, and provided an overview of the actions taken so far.

As members, we scrutinised the written and verbal evidence presented, and concluded that suitable progress is being made overall.

Detailed notes of meeting 2 are available at appendix B.

2.3 Health meeting (3)

This meeting considered Areas for Improvement 2, 7, 9 and 18

Jacqueline Barnes (Director of Nursing) explained that the Arden Cluster is working to a different Action Plan to that of WCC. Their Action Plan is based on the Care Quality Commission (CQC) inspection report, as opposed to the Ofsted inspection report that WCC is working to.

We also observed that WCC and the Arden Cluster have set different timescales for completion of the actions in their respective plans. The Arden Cluster is working to longer implementation times, which meant that certain evidence was unavailable to us for detailed scrutiny.

For Area 2, we heard that an audit of unscheduled care notifications by the Arden Cluster is due in October 2012 to ensure the necessary improvements have been made.

For Area 7, we listened to verbal evidence about the Arden Cluster's training plans and were satisfied that the improvement was being addressed satisfactorily.

For Area 9, it was the opinion of officers that the inspection findings related more to improvements needed in Coventry than Warwickshire.

For Area 18, we learned that a designated nurse for child protection/LAC will be in post from June 2012, and she will have a responsibility to ensure LAC have timely access to supervision, support and advice on health matters.

It became apparent at this meeting, due to the lack of detailed information to scrutinise from the Arden Cluster, that the original aim of taking a report to the 20 June 2012 OSC meeting was no longer appropriate.

Detailed notes of meeting 3 are available at appendix C.

2.4 Looked After Children meeting (4)

This meeting considered Areas for Improvement 11, 12, 13, 14, 16, 17, 19, 20

Based on a very useful, in-depth and wide-ranging discussion with carers from the Fostering Service and relevant senior officers, we were satisfied that all areas for improvement are being suitably addressed.

In relation to Area 13, we acknowledged that Ofsted's reference to a Corporate Parenting Board has resulted in the formation of Warwickshire's Corporate Parenting Panel, which is now working to improve elected members' knowledge of corporate parenting. The terms of reference and membership of the Panel have been agreed by Cabinet. At the time of writing, it has held two meetings and is scheduled to meet every two months.

Detailed notes of meeting 4 are available at appendix D.

2.5 Interim report

At this stage of the review, it became apparent that not all information or evidence was available for full scrutiny. Therefore, we produced an interim report outlining progress to date. This was circulated to all members via email, and printed copies were made available to members of the Children and Young People Overview & Scrutiny Committee at its meeting on 20 June 2012. We agreed to reconvene in December 2012 when the outstanding information would be available in order to complete the review.

2.6 Final evidence-gathering meeting (5)

On 6 December 2012, we received an update on overall progress of the Action Plan from Jenny Butlin-Moran, who explained that:

- All elements of the Action Plan have been completed, but on-going work is needed to maintain them
- The Action Plan was presented to the Warwickshire Safeguarding Children Board (WSCB) on 5 December 2012, and all stakeholders were satisfied with progress

We were keen to look at the areas of the Action Plan where information was not previously available to be assured that progress was being achieved.

Based on the discussion with Jenny Butlin-Moran and Jackie Channell (who had taken up post as the Arden Cluster's Designated Nurse for Child Protection), we were satisfied that all areas for improvement are being suitably addressed, but requested specific confirmation on the information protocols in place at University Hospital Coventry and Warwickshire (UHCW) with regard to children being admitted from different local authorities.

This confirmation was provided to us latterly via email, which is included at appendix G. Although this goes some way to appeasing our concerns, we did feel that efforts ought to be made by Warwickshire Children's Services to hold discussion with Coventry Children's Services with a view to agreeing a common practice.

Detailed notes of meeting 5 are available at appendix E.

3.0 Recommendations

Our remit was to develop recommendations that “help the service to complete the Action Plan” and that “must add value to work that the service is already undertaking”.

Based on our review, the Task & Finish Group members are satisfied that the Action Plan is being implemented and monitored in a robust and detailed manner (this is confirmed by Appendix F, which shows our conclusions against each action within the plan), and we have no suggestions to put forward that would add value to the existing work of the service. Our first recommendation is therefore:

- 1. To endorse the overall conclusion of the Task & Finish Group that the Safeguarding Action Plan is being implemented and monitored in a satisfactory manner**

However, as a result of the concerns we had in section 2.6 regarding the information protocols with University Hospital Coventry and Warwickshire, our second recommendation is as follows:

- 2. To encourage the children’s services teams from Warwickshire and Coventry to work towards a common approach to sharing child protection information with University Hospital Coventry and Warwickshire**

On a similar theme, although not a formal recommendation, we would like to see a more joined-up approach between the County Council and the Arden Cluster on joint action plans such as these to ensure both organisations are working to the same outcomes and timescales.

We also recognise that Warwickshire Safeguarding Children Board undertakes regular monitoring of the County Council’s safeguarding arrangements and would suggest that the Committee establishes a closer link with the Board to understand its function, avoid duplication of scrutiny and share information when appropriate.

To reflect these latter two statements, our final recommendation is therefore for the Children and Young People Overview & Scrutiny Committee:

- 3. To consider and agree any actions that might be necessary as a result of the observations outlined in section 3 of the report**

4.0 Acknowledgements

We would like to thank everyone involved in this review, particularly the lead officers from the Safeguarding team and the foster carers who made such valuable contributions.