

Reading Safeguarding Children Board Newsletter

Issue 3

April 2013

About the Safeguarding Children Board

Local Safeguarding Children Boards (LSCBs) help make sure that all organisations who provide services to children work together to keep them safe. A recent Ofsted report set out what an effective Board looks like. Here are some of the most important characteristics;

It can demonstrate that it is independent, accountable, transparent and a robust challenger of the local system, especially frontline practice

It sees and uses children's journeys and experiences as a key measure of the difference being made

Understands and reviews the breadth and impact of early help, support for children 'in need' and child protection practice including child protection thresholds.

Understands and acts upon the experiences of all agencies in helping and protecting children, young people and families

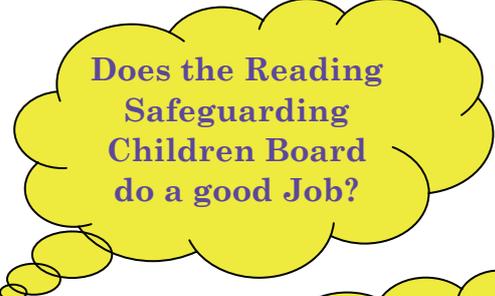
Is deeply searching for system feedback and learning from that knowledge

has local multi-agency professional guidance and procedures for helping and protecting children and young people – including advice for adult services and regularly reviews it.

Understands the impact and quality of supervision for professional frontline staff

Leads a case-auditing system that provides learning about the quality of practice, the recording of decisions and practice intent, the quality of management oversight, professional judgement and minimisation of risk

Understands performance information and uses it to understand the story behind data.

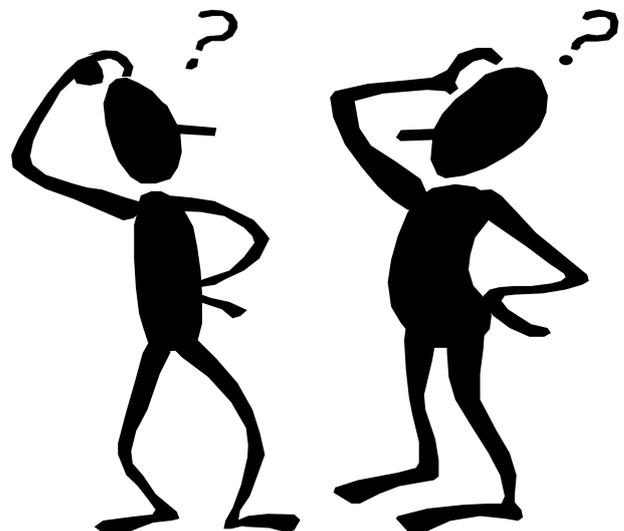


Does the Reading Safeguarding Children Board do a good Job?



What should we be doing differently?

Let us know what you think we need to change.



Update from the April Board Meeting

14 people were present with all agencies except police represented. There were reports on a wide range of subjects and 3 different presentations.

CAFCASS: We heard about the work of CAFCASS the court advisory service, Kevin Gibbs the manager told of his concerns about children affected by acrimonious divorces and what his service can do to help protect children. He also told us about court work with children looked after by the local authority. He told us of an increasing workload and evidence of significant improvement in the allocation of work in the past year.

Welfare Reform: There was then a presentation about changes to welfare benefits and how these will affect children and families in Reading. Two slides are produced below.

Universal Credit - Phased roll out from October 2013

- Replacement of 6 major benefits to one application form/ payment.
- Online process only – LAs expected to support those who will find this difficult
- One monthly payment per household – includes housing element
- One nominated recipient

Benefit Cap – July 2013-

- Limit to the amount of overall benefits (not including Child Benefit) a household can receive
- £350 a month for single people, £500 for everyone else includes housing costs
- Until a person is transferred to UC reduction will be taken from HB
- Officers working with identified households that will be affected

OFSTED Inspection: The final presentation shared the findings of a recent unan-

nounced OFSTED inspection of children's social care services that took place in March. The inspectors viewed 80 cases, shadowed social workers on visits, observed core groups, conferences, strategy meetings, visited key sites, met key partners. Their findings included;

Progress clearly seen, children safe, stable workforce, developing early help.

Clear ambition, shared by partners, good understanding of ourselves, clear about stepping up the continuous improvements seen

Consistency remains the key issue

Thresholds not well understood by agencies despite clear documentation

CAFs well established screening but very few initiated by health, voluntary sector or children's centres, quality of plans variable

The Board will monitor the implementation of the OFSTED recommendations. The Board returned to the work initiated in January of trying to improve referrals into children's social care and noted some good agency action plans. The police have said they hope to produce an action plan by September.

Learning and Development – Domestic Violence

We told you in our last newsletter that the LSCB is currently auditing case files to check that domestic violence is identified and responded to appropriately. The audit found lots of good information sharing and produced some advice to police on how they can improve notification to health services if they are called to an incident where the woman is pregnant. Pregnant women face a higher risk of domestic abuse.

Working Together 2013

The government produced its final version of guidance on safeguarding in April 2013. Safeguarding children - the action we take to promote the welfare of children and protect them from harm - is everyone's responsibility. Everyone who comes into contact with children and families has a role to play. All relevant professionals should read and follow this guidance so that they can respond to individual children's needs appropriately. This statutory guidance sets out key roles for individual organisations and key elements of effective local arrangements for safeguarding. It is very important these arrangements are strongly led and promoted at a local level, specifically by:

- A strong lead from local authority members, and the commitment of chief officers in all agencies, in particular the Director of Children's Services and Lead Member for Children's Services in each local authority; and

- Effective local coordination and challenge by the LSCBs in each area. It tells all agencies very clearly that "Children are clear what they want from an effective safeguarding system that .Children want to be respected, their views to be heard, to have stable relationships with professionals built on trust and for consistent support provided for their individual needs. This should guide the behaviour of professionals. Anyone working with children should see and speak to the child; listen to what they say; take their views seriously; and work with them collaboratively when deciding how to support their needs.

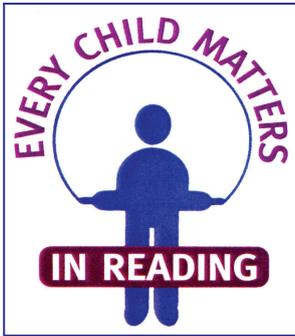
The Board needs to change some of its practices and procedures to meet the requirements of the new guidance. We have put the details in our work plan.

Children have said they need:

- **Vigilance:** to have adults notice when things are troubling them
- **Understanding and Action:** to understand what is happening; to be heard and understood; and to have that acted upon
- **Stability:** to be able develop an on-going stable relationship of trust with those helping them
- **Respect:** to be treated with the expectation that they are competent rather than not
- **Information and engagement:** to be informed about and involved in procedures, decisions, concerns and plans
- **Explanation:** to be informed of the outcome of assessments and decisions and reasons when their views have not been met with a positive response
- **Support:** to be provided with support in their own right as well as a member of their family
- **Advocacy:** to be provided with advocacy to assist them in putting forwards their views

Introducing Board Members

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Policies and Procedures

The Board is responsible for having an up to date effective set of Procedures that explains what to do in certain situations. There are also some guidance notes. You can look at the Procedures either through a direct link on your computer desk top where they exist or by clicking on:

<http://berks.proceduresonline.com/index.htm>



Emotional Health and Self Harming in Young People

The Board had asked a group of staff to investigate together how services responded to young people who self harmed the group found that;

Assessments were completed to a satisfactory standard, though the risk assessment element of the work was not evidenced as well.

While interagency contact and parental contact is the norm, the detail and quality of that contact has been difficult to judge because of the lack of detail in case records.

The support offered tends not to be detailed, and there is consideration for some local consistent information that can be used across partner agencies.

The report sets out a detailed action plan on how services need to improve with proposals to produce an aide memoire for staff reminding them of child protection procedures and what to include in a good risk assessment. The group also hope to see a leaflet listing more sources of help that they can give to young people and their parents. This list is available on the LSCB website;

www.reading.gov.uk/lscb

Missing Children

As part of the joint Home Office and ACPO Reducing Bureaucracy programme, a change to the current working definition of a missing person will come in to effect in April 2014. The new definition distinguishes between people who are:

Absent- not at a place where they are expected or required to be.

Missing - not at the place they are expected to be but the circumstances are out of character or the context suggests they may be subject of a crime or at risk of harm to themselves or others.