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## 1. Introduction and Chair's Overview

- 1.1 As Independent Chair of the London Borough Richmond upon Thames LSCB I welcome you to the Annual Report for 2008/2009. The outgoing independent chair, Sarah Baker, has informed me that the last year has provided both challenges and opportunities through which the partner agencies have been able to enhance the safety and wellbeing of children and young people in the borough.
- 1.2 We have seen the benefits of working collectively across the borough to enable a stronger focus to be put on safeguarding in all community areas for children and young people.
- 1.3 The structure of the Children and Young People's Trust has been reviewed and strengthened by the new Director of Children's Services and Culture, Nick Whitfield, in line with the DCSF Guidance on Children's Trusts. The changes have placed the LSCB at the heart of the Trust and ensured that safeguarding is central to all decision making in both the commissioning and provision of services to which children and young people have access.
- 1.4 We have strengthened our relationship with the London Borough of Richmond upon Thames Adult Safeguarding Board to have a greater impact on the wider agenda of safeguarding, for example in domestic violence, mental health, and transitions for young people to adult services. This has worked towards further improving outcomes for children and young people.
- 1.5 In April 2008 we started work with the boroughs of Kingston upon Thames and Hounslow to review all child deaths and established a Child Death Overview Panel under the terms of the Children Act 2004.
- 1.6 The national safeguarding scene, in particular the death of Baby Peter and the subsequent review of children's services in Haringey, has also led to a comprehensive local review of many aspects of the systems and processes in place for safeguarding across the partner agencies. At the time of writing, these actions continue but have already provided the opportunity for reflection and examination of how we work together and learn from others.<sup>1</sup>
- 1.7 In December 2008 Ofsted published the Annual Performance Assessment report for Richmond. In the Staying Safe category, services continued to be judged as 'outstanding' and graded as 4. Ofsted reported the following major strengths:
- Safeguarding is effectively promoted through the Local Safeguarding Children Board (LSCB).
  - The stability of placements for looked after children and for those with learning difficulties and/or disabilities is excellent.
  - There are effective protocols to safeguard missing children.
- Significantly there were no areas where improved performance was required by Ofsted. Yet this does not imply that we are complacent in our approach or desire to ensure that children and young people in the borough are well safeguarded.
- 1.8 I would like to take this opportunity to thank all partners for their outstanding and continuing commitment to safeguarding children and young people in the London

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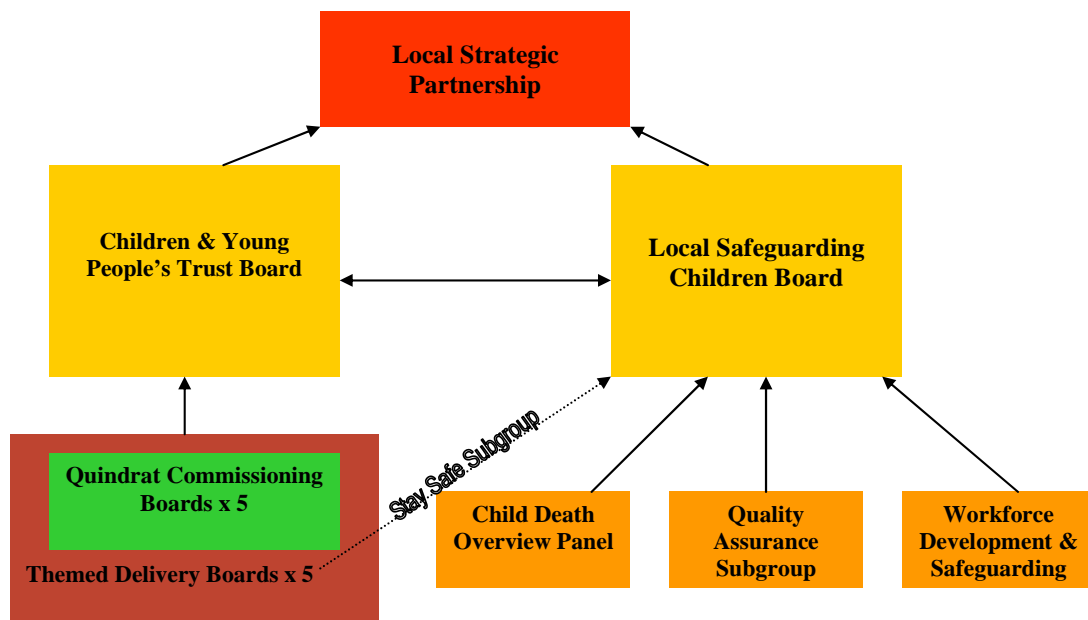
<sup>1</sup> Lord Laming has since published his report in March 2009, and the response from the DCSF - Action Plan was launched in May 2009

Borough of Richmond upon Thames. I am sure that we shall continue to improve services as well as seeking to get across to the community that safeguarding is everyone's business.

## 2. Accountability and reporting

- 2.1 The LSCB is the key statutory mechanism for agreeing how the relevant organisations in each local area will co-operate to safeguard and promote the welfare of children and for ensuring the effectiveness of what they do. While the work of LSCB contributes to the wider goals of improving the wellbeing of all children, it has a particular focus on aspects of the 'staying safe' outcome. Its roles are set out in guidance issued under the Children Act 2004.
- 2.2 The LSCB has an important role in contributing to the work of the Children and Young People's Trust and ensuring that in its wider role of planning, commissioning and delivering services that the Trust gives due priority to safeguarding.
- 2.3 In carrying out its monitoring role, the LSCB receives reports from the Stay Safe Subgroup of the Children and Young People's Trust and has established its own Quality Assurance Subgroup to scrutinise the effectiveness of safeguarding services in the local area.
- 2.4 The diagram in Figure 1 below shows the structure and how the groups relate to each other under the new local Trust arrangements.

Figure 1: Governance Arrangements and Accountability



### **3. How safe are children and young people in Richmond upon Thames?**

- 3.1 This is the key question that the LSCB has to address, all the more so in the light of the attention that has been given to child protection services since the tragic events in Haringey and the death of Baby Peter. The LSCB is in no doubt that providing a safe environment for children and young people in Richmond upon Thames, in schools, homes and the wider community remains the highest priority we have.
- 3.2 The responses to the 'Tellus Survey'<sup>2</sup> in 2008 showed that the majority of children surveyed felt safe in their schools and when going to and from school. The same survey found that 47% of children experienced some form of bullying compared to the national figure of approximately 50%. A local survey of schools found that a minority (approximately 5%) of children were often or sometimes physically bullied and 8% were often or sometimes verbally bullied. The Richmond Strategic Anti-Bullying Group has been created to address this and implement the borough-wide bullying guidance and strategy and to coordinate and link with the London Regional Anti Bullying Alliance (LRABA).
- 3.2 Children and young people are also safeguarded against accidents on the roads. We achieve this through good promotional events on road safety in schools and in borough childcare settings. The quality and safety of childcare provision in Richmond upon Thames is also of a high standard with rigorous pre- registration training, followed by a continuous training programme and regular monitoring visits by the Early Years and Childcare team ensuring that the staff are skilled and able to work safely with young children.
- 3.3 We have a very proactive Domestic Abuse Forum (DAF) providing an effective forum for all partners to assess levels of abuse and to work together to target services to address and prevent further incidences of domestic abuse. The Children's Subgroup of the DAF focuses on those children at risk of harm from domestic abuse and report on those referrals received by Specialist Services where domestic abuse is an issue. A full report in respect of 2008/09 information regarding children subject to domestic abuse is due to the Quality Assurance Subgroup of the LSCB (QASG) in July 2009.
- 3.4 The LSCB continues to take a strategic and operational role in the coordination and scrutiny of services in the borough. We now have regular reporting to the Board on those areas which are of concern in terms of strategic and operational safeguarding. Those children at risk of harm are identified early by the collective approach of partners in responding to their needs and appropriate levels of intervention are planned and delivered in partnership. Effective prevention and good family support may have been the reason for the declining trend of numbers of children on the CPR or subject to a child protection plan. The decrease is from 49 in 2005/06 to 34 at the end of 2008/09. The rate of child protection plans per 10,000 children in the local population is 8.87 for 2008/09. This is below the levels for similar areas and the national averages. This has been the case for a number of years as, traditionally, the borough receives a far lower rate of referrals per 10,000 children in the local population than nationally or amongst our comparator authorities.
- 3.5 Those percentage of children whose initial assessments were completed on time in Richmond upon Thames (76.1%) is comparable to the authorities with which we are compared. We are confident that these children receive a through assessment of their needs and that services are well directed at meeting these. We will be providing

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<sup>2</sup> Tellus 3 was conducted in selected borough schools by Ofsted and DCSF in 2008.

a fuller analysis of all child protection work from referral to planning to the LSCB continually from July 2009 and onward.

- 3.6 The Initial Response Team (IRT) in Specialist Children's Services continue to work closely with health, education and police partners to ensure that responses are rapid, assessments are holistic and interventions are timely.
- 3.7 The work which has been done in respect of e-safety in the borough, notably with schools, has been exemplary and cutting edge. The Board has an e-safety strategy in place and, it is vital to note, that the guidance is not limited to schools, but applies to our local youth settings and services working with children educated other than at school. E-safety aims to provide a safe internet infrastructure to ensure that content is filtered and that safe facilities are used for social networking.
- 3.8 Services continue to work to the London Child Protection Procedures. These were recently revised and updated by the London Safeguarding Children Board to take into account the work of each Child Death Overview Panel (see section 4).

#### **4. Child Death Overview Panel (CDOP)**

- 4.1 In line with the Children Act 2004 and 'Working Together to Safeguard Children', 2006, a Child Death Overview Panel (CDOP) was set up to review all information in relation to child deaths. The three London boroughs of Kingston, Hounslow and Richmond have come together to undertake this role. Over the past year we have worked collectively to ensure we have robust working practices in place. These include an independent chair and robust terms of reference which are in line with the London Safeguarding Children Board policies and procedures. We have membership and commitment from key partners across the three boroughs to ensure that informed discussion and debates take place.
- 4.2 An Administrator has been appointed to manage the work of the CDOP including all information received for each child death and a rapid response team is in place in each borough to support families and agencies following the unexpected death of a child. The rapid response panel reports to each meeting of the CDOP.
- 4.4 The Panel has had a number of development sessions including information sharing and data protection, and working with the Coroner – these have enabled us to strengthen our ways of working and given confidence to the Panel members in undertaking their roles. Further development sessions will take place in the year ahead.

We have also secured agreement with another London CDOP to work together in the next year to benchmark the work of the CDOP ensuring that we make positive improvements to the work of the Panel.

#### **5. The Quality Assurance Subgroup**

- 5.1 The Quality Assurance Subgroup of the LSCB was relaunched in May 2008. Since then it has met on a regular basis and has worked to the following programme in 2008/09:
  - Participation in the London Safeguarding Children Board dataset pilot – this pilot is seeking to establish a pan London dataset for benchmarking performance indicators and information across all London LSCBs

- Overview of improving NI 71 – Children Missing from Care or Home. This self assessment looks at key criteria for preventing children from absconding from home or care, and services offered to those who habitually seek to abscond in the local area to ensure that they are safeguarded
- Audit of child protection decision making. This work is looking at a snapshot of decision making to see if the quality of work can be improved. Recommendations are made to all agencies working together to safeguard children and not social care alone.
- Section 11 audit – an annual review of all agencies under the duty to work together to safeguard children and young people to ensure that they have systems and arrangements in place to execute their statutory responsibilities effectively.

5.2 This work continues in 2009/10, notably in respect of the s.11 audit and improving NI 71.

## **6. Workforce development and safeguarding training**

6.1 The work of the workforce development and safeguarding training subgroup is directed at ensuring that key sections of the children's workforce receive effective training in safeguarding children. An annual training programme is published and is aligned to the key requirements of the London Child Protection procedures.

6.2 In September 2008, a new Professional Development Advisor for Safeguarding Children was appointed and a redesign of the basic awareness training was completed. 'Train the trainer' courses were delivered to agencies to maximize learning and training across the workforce and work began in March to analyse the uptake of all courses. Courses delivered are set within a framework of competency outcomes.

6.3 Further work will be done in 2009/10 on developing and targeting safeguarding training to ensure that the children's workforce in Richmond is receiving the appropriate levels of safeguarding training that enable them to work safely and effectively with children and young people, that signs of risk and harm are identified early, and that we develop our workforce skills to address these competently.

## **7. Working with children and young people**

7.1 During 2008 and 2009 the LSCB has developed a stronger working relationship with the Richmond Youth Forum. We have had regular meetings which were led and chaired by a member of the youth forum. Members of the LSCB have met with the Youth Forum to discuss a variety of topics, determined by young people attending which have included safer policing – stop and search, access and confidentiality when accessing health services.

7.2 Children and young people took part in an event to shape the content of the current draft of the Children and Young People's Plan held in November 2008 and have had further input to the priorities of the plan through an away day held in March 2009.

7.3 Throughout 2009 we will reach a much broader group of children and young people to ensure that their views are reflected in the work of the LSCB, and this is one of the key challenges ahead.

## **8. Future challenges**

8.1 In once again thanking the Board for its efforts throughout 2008/09 it is clear that there is still much to do. There is still action to complete in the LSCB Action Plan for 2008/09 and new challenges in strengthening safeguarding practices in line with Lord Laming's recommendations contained in his progress report on child protection in England. The developing list of issues to tackle in the future already includes the following:

- Strengthening how well we work with children and young people themselves and how we ensure that their views are reflected in the work of the LSCB
- Continuing to strengthen scrutiny of performance and implementing good quality assurance systems across agencies
- Ensuring that children and young people have safe places to play in the borough in line with the Play Safety Forum (this is currently being addressed via the borough's Cultural Plan and action arising from its implementation).
- Developing the quality and range of appropriately targeted safeguarding training for the children's workforce
- Doing more on safer recruitment and the rolling out of the new Vetting and Barring scheme devised by the Independent Safeguarding Authority (ISA)
- Ensuring that vetting and barring protocols, procedures and guidance are in place across the all agencies in line with the Independent Safeguarding Authority's (ISA) Vetting and Barring Scheme

Tony Eccleston  
Chair