

BRIEFING NOTE

Agenda Item no. 8

TO: Children and Young People Scrutiny and Performance Panel

DATE: 17 July 2012

RE: Peer Review Update

Purpose

This note is to provide Scrutiny members with feedback from the Children's Services Safeguarding Peer Review.

Findings

The letter from the Peer Review summarising their findings is attached.

Recommendations

The key recommendations from the Peer Review were:-

1. Draw up a simple concise and early understood road map.
2. Communicate/market the vision identifying how services need to change.
3. Identifying key indicators that will demonstrate how you are achieving improved outcomes for children and families.
4. Making partnership working 'real' by not shying away from challenge, your working relationships are secure enough for this.
5. Developing member awareness and knowledge.

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Pauline Pilkington
Director for Children's Services
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25th March 2012

Dear Pauline,

RE: CHILDREN'S SERVICES SAFEGUARDING PEER REVIEW

Following the recent peer review, we agreed to send you a letter confirming our findings and summarising the outline action you will be taking. As you know the safeguarding challenge focused on the following key areas:

- Outcomes
- Vision, strategy and leadership
- Service delivery and effective practice
- Working together and the safeguarding board
- Managing resources

Within these overall areas, you asked the team to explore the following issues

- The effectiveness of your new multi-disciplinary arrangements for delivering early help
- How well you are engaging with partners to improve safeguarding services, particularly the NHS
- The impact of recent investments in children's social care
- The effectiveness of your LSCB and how it can best respond to Munro

This letter sets out our findings on these areas including the areas of strength identified and the areas which you might want to consider further.

It is important to stress again that this was not an inspection. A team of peers used their experience to reflect on the evidence you presented on safeguarding vulnerable children and young people. The focus of our feedback is to assist you to sustain and to improve on current levels of performance.

Summary Strengths

- Outcomes are moving in the right direction and are often ahead of national and comparator trend data
- Strategic leadership is strong and based on sound principles and working relationships
- Staff and managers are committed, passionate professionals, working purposefully for their community and are proud of what they are achieving for children and young people in Walsall
- Young people's participation and engagement is a particular strength
- Frontline practice is innovative and safe
- There is a widespread commitment to, and the council is investing additional resources in, preventive services and early intervention
- Partnership working is soundly based on strong cross sector arrangements and effective working relationships

Summary Areas for Consideration

- Celebrate your success!
- Your road map is not set out simply and succinctly in an accessible format. All staff need to be easily able to identify how their service and their individual contribution relates to the end goal, operational investments and strategic priorities. A simple and succinct road map would enable them to do this.
- This road map should be outcome focused and link across the children and young people plan and the Walsall Safeguarding Children Board to define what success looks like, the key measures that will tell you that you have got there, and how services will change so that that future state will be achieved.
- It is equally important to set out accountabilities for delivery of the road map, at a service, partnership and interagency level.
- Ensure you pay attention to the detail of your planning and reporting processes so that published plans and documentation are always up to date and aligned
- You are incorporating many of the Munro principles in your planning and delivery. As part of the process of developing your road map it would be useful for the board to test itself against key Munro areas e.g. locally driven safeguarding measures, early help, reflective practice, facilitating a culture of learning and development and develop a specific Munro implementation plan
- You are beginning to evaluate and use data, but there is a need to ensure better coordination and strategic focus.
- Enhance your understanding of how you are making a difference for children, young people and families by
 - Collecting and evidencing the positive outcomes that children young people and their families are reporting to you
 - Shift your focus from general service performance indicators to soft and hard outcomes that demonstrate successful impact on children young people and families
- Communicate and sell your joined up safeguarding story more effectively by reviewing and improving your communication and marketing strategies

- Make sure that you continue to effectively raise and resolve any blockages that you encounter in your joint working arrangements, assign responsibility for remedial action and accountability to track progress, so that improvements are implemented and sustained
- More could be done to inform and raise awareness amongst all councillors of their corporate parenting responsibilities

The peer team concluded that there is much of which Children's Services in Walsall, and partner organisations, can be justifiably proud. We were particularly impressed with the excellent examples we saw of the engagement and participation of young people, where we felt you had much to offer other authorities. We found many examples of forward thinking strategic leadership and innovative frontline practice. You are resourcing and progressing your aim to provide borough wide multi agency services at all levels of need to produce savings in the high cost of reactive services. Safeguarding practice was considered safe. There have been positive improvements in some of your target indicators, and you can show progress that is above trend nationally and against comparator authorities. You have a strong strategic focus on those indicators where you wish to see increased impact. You have a maturing safeguarding board that is well led and provides a measure of challenge across the partnership.

You are developing services in partnership and have built effective relationships across agencies; there is a shared focus on innovation, improvements in outcomes and cost reductions. Together with your partners, you have prioritised early intervention and preventive services; you have invested your own resources in the New Operating Model (NOM) and partners are reshaping their own services to complement those provided by the local authority. This new approach is as yet at an early stage of roll out, but your previous experience of neighbourhood based multi agency preventive approaches has been very positive and is being used to inform future developments.

There are some issues to address.

We found a surprising reluctance to celebrate your key achievements. We did not get a sufficient sense of these from the documentation that we were sent. However, on meeting frontline and other staff, we quickly learned of much that was forward thinking, joined up and innovative. We think you should do more to celebrate these successes, not just with your staff through the awards events that we saw, but also collect data and disseminate what you are achieving so that external stakeholders can appreciate what you are putting in place and the impact it is having.

Although NOM is understood at strategic level, and across key partners, you have been less successful at communicating and marketing your new approach and focus outside this core group. Partly this is a question of the obscurity of the term itself. It is also a result of the fact that plans are not always aligned and there has not been sufficient attention to detail in updating and reviewing documentation. Finally, there is not as yet a simple clear and succinct statement of your future direction, the rationale for it and the benefits it will bring. Rectifying these issues would help you to clarify the focus and improvements that you are prioritising and set out how your strategic plans and frontline

practice work together to achieve improved outcomes and produce anticipated cost savings.

There is strong political commitment to and understanding of the direction of travel you are taking, but the corporate parenting responsibilities of all councillors could be reinforced via a targeted training programme to reach all councillors.

You have seen commendable improvements in outcomes and have positive stories to tell, however, you still have not yet developed a robust way to record the improvements in outcomes that families report from your early intervention sites. You are working on evaluation of your new area based services. It is important that as part of this process you are able to use hard and soft data to identify what it is within this new approach that is giving you the most significant benefits - in terms of impact on families and on key indicators. In that way you can build on what works and prioritise future development on those elements of the new operating model that do most to improve impact and reduce costs. Your two early developments of the new operating model were frequently referred to as 'pilots'. If these are truly pilots and not just forerunners of a wider rollout programme it would be worth formalising the learning from them and demonstrating how this has informed the future development of this concept in other locations.

Partnership working and cross agency relationships are a strength but you yourselves acknowledge that the size of the borough means these relationships could be disrupted by changes in personnel. You are very dependent on a small number of key individuals to drive forward your priorities. Any changes here may disrupt the consensus that you have worked so hard to build. We found that a measure of challenge between partners does take place. However, we also found a reliance on informal contact between stakeholders as the preferred method of resolving difficulties. When progress is not made through this informal route we found a reluctance to escalate issues to a more formal level of interagency challenge. You need to be careful that this desire to maintain consensus does not get in the way of resolving challenges and blockages.

The systematic development, by yourself and your partners, of a clear and succinct road map and a Munro implementation plan will help you better communicate your vision, ensure staff partners and services are signed up to and implement your new vision; and give you a structure against to evaluate progress.

There is now a need to move onto the next steps of the journey focusing on those areas that you have identified in the prioritisation workshop held at the conclusion of the peer review.

You identified the following broad areas that you and your partners believe will support Walsall in making further progress in the future:

- Draw up a simple concise and easily understood road map
- Communicate/market the vision, identifying how services need to change

- Identifying key indicators that will demonstrate how you are achieving improved outcomes for children and families
- Making partnership working 'real' by not shying away from challenge, your working relationships are secure enough for this
- Developing member awareness and knowledge

The table below expands the summary earlier in this letter and highlights Walsall's strengths as noted by the peer team.

<p>Outcomes</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Front line children's social care practice is safe and your PIs are good by comparison to both national data and statistical neighbours; there is evidence of positive impacts on the lives of children and young people • We saw good evidence of how young people are involved in service design and the programmes that assist them to do this. You are a national leader in this. • Ofsted judgements on school safeguarding are sound with 53.7% of schools rated good and 23.7% outstanding • You are hoping to demonstrate the positive impact you are making via a focus on preventive support and early intervention through your early help offer. • You have a clear commitment to measure outcomes and these are being strengthened via your links with Research in Practice, OBA community profiling data and the local university • There is a strong basis for developing qualitative or soft measures – across all agencies frontline practitioners can demonstrate 'making a difference' • No looked after child has been excluded from school during the last two years which is a significant achievement
<p>Vision, Strategy & Leadership</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • There is a clear priority and commitment given to children's safeguarding within the council; this is driven at the highest level by the Chief Executive, the leader and the lead member for children. • There is innovative leadership by young people in driving forward safeguarding on behalf of their peers. • There are strong partnerships within frontline services, and excellent personal relationships between partner agencies • The DCS and senior managers drive change through and are reported to have had a 'massive impact' over the past two years • Heads of Service work cohesively in leading children's services supported by appropriate training and good resources • Frontline managers remove potential barriers and encourage staff to be innovative • The Chief Executive's leadership of the Borough Management Team strengthens strong central strategic leadership • We saw strong evidence of the use of scrutiny to improve service delivery • Your Children and Young People Plan refresh includes a core strategy around safeguarding

<p>Working Together and WSCB</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • There is a clear statement of intent to work in partnership to monitor and improve safeguarding for children across the borough. • Interagency working is excellent • Integrated services for early help to support children and their families are emerging. Joint commissioning and joint funding arrangements are in place. Information is shared appropriately across agencies. • A highly regarded independent WSCB chair has responsibility for children and adult safeguarding. The safeguarding children board is maturing and there is challenge by the chair across agencies and IA audits. • Effective business support is provided to the WSCB • The WSCB has very wide representation across the board and the operations group, governance arrangements are in place and a membership booklet sets out roles, responsibilities, attendance and workflows. • The safeguarding inspection team (aka shadow board, SIT) provides strong consultation between the WSCB and young people. Young people have identified specific issues to ensure that safeguarding practice is effective and improves outcomes for children; these have been incorporated into the CP work plan. • Staff reported to us that multi agency training is very effective and promotes mutual understanding
<p>Service Delivery & Effective practice</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • There is broad evidence of safe practice in child protection based on strong partnership working; front end systems and processes are fit for purpose (e.g. CARE Panel) • Professionals are empowered and supported to develop their own practice, there is evidence of support, supervision and development of the children's workforce to a high level • There is impact of listening to children and young people across all services • The Munro report is positively impacting on front line delivery through the development of reflective practice, learning from casework and the new early help offer • The council is evolving the work of the Children Centre's and effectively deploying the Think Family workers to address need at an early stage, parenting strategies are adopted and implemented across a wide range of partners • Your early experience in the new operating model has provided clear evidence that it has the potential to make a real difference to outcomes and down-line costs. • Performance management is timely and robust with evidence of improvement driven by intelligent use of data • The council and partners are learning organisations, with

	<p>ample evidence of reflection and review leading to service improvements</p>
Managing Resources	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The council and its partners are making creative use of resources and workforce to give additional support to children young people and their families via the early help offer to both improve outcomes and achieve a reduction in the high cost of level three interventions • The recent increased/redirected investment in the early help offer has enabled Children's Services to 'do things differently' and you are seeing reduced level three costs • Evaluation of practice and comparisons with your statistical neighbours is clearly linked to future thinking and investment decisions • You have begun to develop good examples of financial modelling to inform strategic decisions

The table below expands the summary earlier in this letter and highlights those areas that the peer team felt would benefit from further consideration by Walsall Metropolitan Borough Council and its partners.

Outcomes	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • How will you record the evidence your workforce has of direct impact reported to you by children and families receiving services? How can you best develop a consistent approach to recording these 'outcomes'? • Have you a high level systematic process for case tracking that would identify robust evidence of preventative outcomes and cost savings, how can this best be presented in a coherent and accessible format? • What is the potential impact of demographic change, and how are you working to address narrowing the gaps and child poverty? • Get the best value out of your needs analysis data. You are starting to align data collection under the Children's Area Partnerships with Children and Young People Plan priorities. This achievement could be further expanded and developed across other areas e.g. in relation to safeguarding, to give you a clearer understanding of community and individual needs and outcomes
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<p>Vision, Strategy & Leadership</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The strategic plans of the council and its key partners are not consistently up to date and aligned • Safeguarding is articulated as a council priority but is not included as a Children and Young People plan priority; ensure there are common messages across all strategic plans • Strategy is not consistently data driven; we have seen evidence of data informing safeguarding and child protection but you can go further in terms of e.g. outcome priorities, key indicators of success for children and young people in Walsall, your CYPP, new operating model roll out, early help developments • Councillors would benefit from receiving training in their Corporate Parenting responsibilities • How do strategic leaders assure themselves that there is a climate where risk is openly and constructively discussed? • Do formal meetings of the WSCB chair with the WMBC CE, DCS and leader secure their statutory accountabilities in respect of safeguarding?
<p>Working Together and WSCB</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • You need a simple succinct statement of outcome priorities and indicators that would tell the partnership that they are keeping children and young people safe • Further work needs to be done to ensure regular attendance by all partners at the safeguarding board to ensure meaningful governance. • The WSCB has general member roles and responsibilities but is there a value in securing distinct responsibilities for specific key roles e.g. the Chair, sub group chairs, DCS, lead member • Does your safeguarding board need to better reflect local community diversity? • A monitoring and evaluation group has been set up recently; this group needs to have an agreed work stream. • We were not given an overall training needs analysis nor evidence of how training is achieving an impact; could you usefully build on the experience of how education has demonstrated this in relation to designated teacher training? • You acknowledge that there are workforce capacity issues in both social work and universal health services, which is aggravated by the current period of organizational transition and change, across many partners and the council itself. There is a also concern that the projected increase in additional frontline health professionals requiring extensive training and support may have a negative impact on the ability of current health staff to maintain a safe service whilst engaging with the new operating model and supporting

	<p>schools</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Cyber bullying has been raised as needing attention at WSCB • Is your health and wellbeing board sufficiently developed at this point in time? We acknowledge your rationale for the current state of play but wonder whether this is having an impact on speedily defining the relationship of the health and wellbeing board with safeguarding and other partnerships?
<p>Service Delivery & Effective Practice</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • There is an overdue need to ensure a clear road map so that the rationale for and refocused direction of safeguarding and other services for children and young people is universally communicated, understood by all and so effectively implemented and sustained • Is quality assurance sufficiently developed and embedded to routinely improve practice and performance. For example, there has been drift in child protection planning, in relation to the number of children who are on a child protection plan for a lengthy period, which you acknowledge. Are you assured that your systems to monitor and identify areas where improvements to practice are needed are sufficiently robust? In the above example it would be worthwhile improving monitoring of CPP cases at 12 to 15 months to ensure that drift is prevented. • You need to be vigilant and monitor decision making about single agency or joint agency investigations to ensure there is consistency at all times, and set up and utilise clear accountability routes if this is not the case to ensure that challenges are systematically resolved. • Are you satisfied that the system you have implemented to monitor and ensure police involvement in strategy meetings will deliver the desired improvements? • You are monitoring progress to ensure that health supervision of CP cases is sufficiently analytical and effective, and that the system you have put in place will deliver the improvements and consistency you require. • Careful management is needed to ensure there are no negative impacts on service delivery and team working of the office moves you have planned for social care staff • The developments to date of the new operating model were referred to as 'pilots' but we were not sure how far these were genuine pilots of the concept or were in fact forerunners of a wider roll out. It would be worth formalising the learning from the early development of NOM and demonstrating how this had informed your current roll out programme. • The new operating model is an awkward term for a very interesting development. Is there sufficient and consistent

	<p>understanding of the model across all staff? How useful is the term itself and could you not find a more user friendly name?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • How will you monitor decision making across your three IRS teams to ensure that each of the three teams applies consistently the same decision making framework? It is important that you are assured that all three teams apply the same consistent approach to decision making.
<p>Managing Resources</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The transfer of the Serco contract requires a high level of your senior management time and so will have an impact on other areas of concern for management. You need to ensure that this does not negatively impact on safeguarding. • You need to develop a methodology and data set for the social return on your investment in early help to show where the maximum benefit is being obtained and to help you identify how you are achieving savings on down-line costs • Would you benefit from a single robust statement of how you allocate resources across all elements of your road map? • There is a risk that failing to maintain your current levels of investment in early help could put at risk ongoing savings and improvement to outcomes. You need to reinforce the point that continued investment in the early help offer will be needed over the short to medium term at least, in order that you reap the benefits of this investment in terms of future reductions in level three costs

At the workshop on 16th March 2012 you discussed the feedback presented by the peer team. You identified the following areas for initial exploration:

- Draw up a simple concise and easily understood road map
- Communicate/market the vision, identifying how services need to change
- Identifying key indicators that will demonstrate how you are achieving improved outcomes for children and families
- Making partnership working 'real' by not shying away from challenge, your working relationships are secure enough for this
- Developing member awareness and knowledge

The workshop began the discussion on ideas to address these issues. You have taken away the feedback from these discussions and are currently considering how to take these issues forward.

You and your colleagues will want to consider how you incorporate the team's findings into your improvement plans, including taking the opportunity for sector support through the Children's Improvement Board. Clare Burgess, your regional broker, has been sent a copy of this letter and will be in touch with you to discuss the options for support and how best to share notable practice identified. Clare can be contacted by either email: claire.burgess23@gmail.com or by phone on 077 95 347 686.

We wish you well with taking these priorities forward. The Local Government Association is offering a follow up visit within the next 12 months after the peer review. This would give us both an opportunity to evaluate the process and assess impact.

We would like to thank everyone involved for their participation. Thank you again for agreeing to undertake a children's' safeguarding peer review. Please pass on thanks from the peer challenge team to all staff for their sterling support in preparing for and organising the on-site challenge.

Paul Curran

**Head of Safeguarding Programme,
Local Government Association**

