

HEALTH AND WELLBEING BOARD

18 FEBRUARY 2020

MEDWAY SAFEGUARDING CHILDREN BOARD (MSCB) ANNUAL REPORT 2018-19

Report from: John Drew, MSCB Independent Chair

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Summary

The purpose of this report is to present the Medway Safeguarding Children Board (MSCB) Annual Report 2018-19 to the Health and Wellbeing Board. The MSCB Independent Chair publishes an annual report describing how agencies in Medway have worked together through the year and how effective the arrangements are in Medway to keep children and young people safe from harm, abuse or neglect.

The report summarises the work undertaken in 2018-19 and the replacement of the MSCB with the Medway Safeguarding Children Partnership (MSCP) which transitioned from September 2019.

This report was considered by the Children and Young People Overview and Scrutiny Committee on 9 January 2020 and its comments are set out at section 3 of the report.

1. Budget and Policy Framework

1.1 The Medway Safeguarding Children Board (MSCB) is set up under the Children Act 2004 and has the following main objectives:

- To coordinate what is done by each agency represented on the Board for the purposes of safeguarding and promoting the welfare of children in Medway; and
- To ensure the effectiveness of what is done by those agencies for that purpose.

1.2 The MSCB has a pooled budget made up from financial contributions from its constituent statutory partners:

- Medway Council;
- Medway Clinical Commissioning Group and Health partners;
- Kent Police & Crime Commissioner;
- National Probation Service;

- Kent, Surrey & Sussex Community Rehabilitation Company;
- HM Young Offenders Institution Cookham Wood;
- Medway Secure Training Centre;
- Kent Fire and Rescue Service;
- Children And Families Court Advisory and Support Service (CAFCASS).

2. Background

2.1 The MSCB Independent Chair is required to publish an annual report on the effectiveness of child safeguarding and promoting the welfare of children in Medway. The report is presented annually to the Health and Wellbeing Board, Children and Young People Overview and Scrutiny Committee and the Community Safety Partnership and is appended to this report at Appendix 1.

2.2 The Annual Report brings together in one place reports on all the principle work carried out in Medway during 2018-19 that have been designed to keep children safe from harm, abuse or neglect.

2.3 The Annual Report 2018-19 includes:

- The Independent Chair's assessment of the effectiveness of the arrangements in Medway for keeping children safe from harm, abuse or neglect;
- An overview of the Board's governance and accountability arrangements including the statutory role of the Board, its structure and key relationships with other strategic boards;
- The plans that were in place for the Medway Safeguarding Children Partnership (MSCP) to replace the MSCB on 2 September 2019;
- An analysis of the key activity of the MSCB for the year against the six priorities;
- An overview of the quality assurance and learning and improvement activities during the year; and
- A summary of the MSCB accounts.

2.4 The MSCB was replaced by the MSCP on 2 September 2019. In line with this change, the Joint Working Protocol between Partnership Boards in Medway will be updated and submitted to the Board for approval.

3. Children and Young People Overview and Scrutiny Committee – 9 January 2020

3.1 The Director of People – Children and Adults introduced the report and explained that both the Independent Chair and the Vice-Chair of the Medway Safeguarding Children Board (MSCB) were both unavailable to attend the meeting. The report was the last annual report from the Board, which had been replaced by the Medway Safeguarding Children Partnership (MSCP) in September 2019 and would continue to report to this Committee.

3.2 Members then raised a number of comments and questions, which included:

3.2.1 **Improving approach to keep children safe** – reference was made to section 1.6 of the annual report which related to the outcome of audits showing that

there needed to be a better approach to keep children safe. The Director explained that training was being provided on this issue, which was a priority for the MSCP going forward.

- 3.2.2 **Engaging with the community and voluntary sector** – officers confirmed that Medway Voluntary Action had been part of the Board and were engaged with the MSCP going forward and work would be ongoing with them to reach a wider range of community and voluntary sector organisations.
- 3.2.3 **Increase in children subject to a child protection plan** – questions were raised about the rise in children subject to a child protection plan (CPP). Officers explained that this could relate to a better identification of risk by social work staff although it was also not unusual to see a rise where a local authority has received an inadequate Ofsted judgement. It was also confirmed that the numbers in Medway were on par with national averages and when compared with statistical neighbours.
- 3.2.4 **Medway Secure Training Centre (STC)** – concern was raised that lessons had not been learned from the serious case review into incidents at the STC, which had recently been judged to be inadequate. Officers confirmed that the judgement related to fundamental issues within the STC, which partner agencies had difficulty in influencing but confirmed that this was a priority that the authority was working in strong partnership on, particularly taking forward when the STC closes to reopen as a secure school.
- 3.2.5 **The Board's awareness of the performance of children's social care** – in response to questions about whether the Board anticipated the recent Ofsted judgement, officers explained that the Board should have known but that there were inherent weaknesses in the old system which had been one reason why the arrangements had changed and now firmly put the responsibility upon the three lead agencies (local authority, the Police and the Clinical Commissioning Group).
- 3.2.6 **Identification of Private Fostering Arrangements** – the concern at 3.34 of the report relating to reduction in notifications of new private fostering arrangements was referred to and officers assured Members this was an area of focus for the MSCP to raise awareness around private fostering.
- 3.2.7 **Increase in children subject to a child protection plan** – questions were raised about the rise in children subject to a child protection plan (CPP). Officers explained that this could relate to a better identification of risk by social work staff although it was also not unusual to see a rise where a local authority has received an inadequate Ofsted judgement. It was also confirmed that the numbers in Medway were slightly higher than national averages and when compared with statistical neighbours.
- 3.2.8 **The Local Safeguarding Children Board (LSCB)'s awareness of the performance of children's social care** – in response to questions about whether the Board anticipated the recent Ofsted judgement, officers explained that the Board should have known. However, since the 'Wood Review' of LSCBs, arrangements had now been strengthened and now firmly put the responsibility upon the three lead agencies (local authority, the Police and the Clinical Commissioning Group).

3.2.9 **Attendance of secondary schools** – in response to a query about the attendance of Medway secondary schools at Board meetings, which had been poor, officers explained that there had been a named representative under the Board arrangements and due to work pressures, attendance had been difficult. The MSCP was therefore working with the primary and secondary headteacher forums to develop a network of participants, rather than relying on one individual. It was added that attendance at the Improvement Board by school representatives had been good.

3.3 The Committee noted the report and thanked the Independent Chair for his work on the Board.

4. Risk management

4.1 Whilst there are no specific risks identified, the MSCB annual report 2018-19 presents an analysis of safeguarding in Medway and work to challenge and support the Council and its other partners to address and reduce risks to children.

5. Financial implications

5.1 MSCB is a statutory body funded through financial and “in kind” contributions from local agencies. There are no financial implications for the Council arising from this report.

6. Legal implications

6.1 The production of an annual report for the Local Safeguarding Children Board (LSCB) is a statutory requirement as set out in Working Together to Safeguard Children (2015), HM Government.

7. Recommendations

7.1 The Health and Wellbeing Board is asked to note the comments of the Children and Young People Overview and Scrutiny Committee.

7.2 The Health and Wellbeing Board is asked to consider and comment on the annual report and the effectiveness of local services in keeping children safe.

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Appendices

Appendix 1 – Medway Safeguarding Children Board (MSCB) Annual Report 2018-19.

Background papers

None