

Responses to Consultation on Safeguarding Arrangements As at 23 August 2019

Thank you for including Community Action Suffolk in this review as a Voluntary Community Social Enterprise (VCSE) Sector representative on the Boards.

Our comments for consideration as part of the consultation are below.

We work with both children and adults, so we focus on families and we represent at both children and Suffolk Boards and subgroups. We find great value when groups look at a family approach rather than consistently separating children or adults safeguarding. There are real benefits to both children and adults' professionals learning from each other to benefit and safeguard families. We are not sure how the proposed structure benefits families in this way. This structure looks all lot like the separate LSCB and SAB but at subgroup (LIG) level and never the twain shall meet. It doesn't show who attends the subgroups either so may not take into account who attends these meetings and whether the proposed structure is sustainable.

We thought this was about streamlining and in this proposal LIG goes from 18 currently (1 meets monthly and 1 meets bi monthly) to 22. Potentially the proposed LIG structure more than doubles the number of meetings for us at subgroup level to 26 from the number of current subgroups we attend, mainly through Jacqui Wilkinson. 22 LIG meetings a year is likely to be unsustainable and unlikely to encourage good attendance and provide strong expertise and contributions. We think that the ability for attendees to engage meaningfully is questionable if they are not able to attend regularly due to the number. This structure could put quite a burden on the VCSE and other organisations who do not have multiple staff to attend.

It also seems that there is often duplication between topics covered in separate groups (LSCB/ SAB). Are there not elements of the proposed separate LIG that could be amalgamated to remove duplication by subject/ area of interest? There will be other agencies around that table, who like us, also have an interest in both groups.

If you have any questions please come back to us.

Yours
Jacqui

Jacqui Wilkinson

Training, Safeguarding and Quality Standards Development Officer
Community Action Suffolk

Response

Combining the Policy and Procedures, training and LIG groups into monthly meetings increases the opportunity to ensure that the learning from cases, audits, performance data etc can be effectively feed into new policy and procedures.

For agencies who only used to attend quarterly policy and procedure group meetings, this would appear to increase the number of meetings they need to attend. However, effective agenda setting in advance and minuting of the monthly meetings will allow partners such as the VSCE to select which meetings they attend, rather than attend them all. Alternatively, VCSE partners can attend the quarterly

locality group meetings which give an update on the new policy and procedures developed in the last quarter.

Jacqui, just let us know of any issues you would like to be discussed or decided as we will add specific items to the right agenda and give you a slot.

I am in full support of the changes in the subgroups to support the two main objectives.

It is a breath of fresh air to be focussing on outcomes- not output- with learning and improvement being the main aim of the sub-groups.

The engagement of the sub-groups with the front line practitioners across the partnership is crucial to ensure effective sharing and implementation of the learning which supports making positive changes in practice which is what improves outcome for children and adults we seek to protect; this will be a welcome change in emphasis for the sub-group's work.

Kind Regards

Abi

Abigail Scully
Clinical Governance Manager
People's Directorate

Response

Thank you for your feedback and support Abi.

Whilst I agree with the principle of highlighting the problems, I am concerned that without a brief summary of the overall state of play it may be difficult for those not directly involved to see the complete picture. Psychologically I believe it to be important that groups are allowed to celebrate success as well as only reporting problems. This may only be a note in the report but is important. If the objective is to save time and concentrate on the major issue – much time can be saved by people not reading out the report but to assume that all present have read the paper in advance.

In the report template ...where are the success criteria to be placed and who and when will the outcomes of any measure be reported back to the board? These fields need to be included. For the Schools Forum one is often presented with requests for funding but not clearly identified targets or reports back as to what the funding has/has not achieved. This has greatly improved over recent years but still can be an issue. I fear that the proposals may tend to push safeguarding in the same direction without some form of scheduling. I am also a little confused by the structure sent earlier as to who will be responsible for coordinating each group and where education as practised (not from an LA perspective) fits in to the structure and who will be responding to this?

Regards, Alison Bowman – School Governor representative.

Response

We need to ensure that partners who just attend the quarterly board meetings, such as Lay People or Governor reps are fully briefed and have the background information, they need for Board meetings. We can do this in two ways; make sure that all papers have a background information section, albeit briefer than before. Also, offer quarterly briefings prior to Board for Lay People or any partners who want to attend, delivered by either the Business Mgr or Professional Advisor. This short briefing will explain the papers, the background and the current issues. We would like to offer the latter option of

regular short briefings in advance of meetings. We will build that into our schedule unless we hear from you otherwise.

There will be a standard item on each subgroup agenda to capture and celebrate good practice – for example we recently complete a partnership case review and a letter will be sent to the GP as some excellent practice was identified as part of the review. There is a quarterly Education working group led by Adrian Orr looking at strategic and operational issues as well as policy and training provision. Schools are represented at the quarterly areas locality meetings and we need to ensure that all phases are represented.

Broadly we support the principles and welcome the more coordinated approach.

As housing colleagues have worked to build up the profile of the work in safeguarding circles, it's sad in some ways that there won't be a specific housing subgroup going forward. However, if that means it is mainstreamed as a cross-cutting theme then that is also positive

So our request is that, while we acknowledge that housing guidance and policy is undoubtedly already referenced as an objective in the new structure (under the learning and improvement groups), it continues to have a high profile and that there is a strong presence around the table from housing professionals. We also think that housing matters would merit the delivery sub-group approach from time to time.

Many thanks

Alex (West Suffolk Council)

Response

We have invested a lot of time and effort over the past 12 months to develop the Housing subgroup. Countywide housing representation has increased dramatically and the group is now chaired by a housing rep. It would be a shame to lose this momentum and the good work of the past 12 months. Therefore, it is proposed that there will be operational working groups, that report into the main learning and development subgroup and housing should be one of these. The group can decide if they continue to meet quarterly or more regularly. The Board Central team can offer admin support.

Please accept the following response to the consultation on behalf of Suffolk County Council's Early Years and Childcare Service:

We are in favour of the proposal that seeks to join up the Learning, Policy development, Performance and Audit functions into one monthly Learning and Improvement Group meeting, although this may present some practical challenges around attendance for my staff members.

The Early Years and Childcare Service predominantly support providers in the private, independent and voluntary sector, we have good working relationships in this arena including (but not limited to):

- Following up Initial Child Protection Conference notifications with childcare providers;
- Attending and contributing to LADO strategy meetings where a childcare provider is concerned;
- Providing safeguarding training to childcare providers in line with LSCB requirements and with the Early Years Foundation Stage Framework;
- Conducting annual safeguarding self-assessments of childcare providers who offer government funded childcare for children aged 2, 3 and 4 years; and
- Supporting the quality of childcare provision across the county, working closely with the regulator - Ofsted (including on safeguarding aspects).

Currently there are two seats available to early years and childcare providers on the Schools Forum and these seats are taken up by two members of Suffolk County Council's Early Years Consultative

forum which I organise on behalf of the council. There is 1 other early years representative which is the head teacher of Highfield Nursery School.

There is limited detail in the proposals about how the voice of all early year's settings will be included in the new safeguarding arrangements. We would be happy to learn more about this aspect and if there will be any particular seats at board or subgroup level for childcare provider representatives or if that will be via our service officers? We are unsure if there should be a specific focus on engaging early years settings through the new arrangements or if this should be via our officers or members of schools forum who sit on the safeguarding board.

Overall the voice of childcare providers does tend to be underrepresented in these types of arrangements. There are a number of reasons for this which are historical and anecdotal. Firstly, childcare providers find it hard to get away from the day to day work of caring for children to attend meetings and often they are in a low paid sector which means the providers or childminders cannot afford to attend and engage in these types of arrangements. The other is that they often get missed out of arrangements because they are confused with maintained schools or because it is felt that headteachers (who have nursery classes) can represent their interests, which is not typically the case in practice.

With this in mind it would appear that there are no specific early years and childcare provider roles or seats for them to fill at the subgroup or indeed at board level. Consideration should perhaps be given to use the opportunity of the consultation to consider childcare practitioners and some of the challenges that face the sector, and then how to attract them to be more proactively engaged in Suffolk's new Safeguarding Arrangements for example by covering expenses, changing the times of meetings to allow attendance or collecting feedback from the early years settings in other more creative ways.

Currently there are two officers in the service who attend meetings and link to the current safeguarding arrangements; namely Liz Pitts and Anita Abram. Monthly meetings are very frequent so it may be that the Early Years and Childcare Service and childcare providers who might attend would do so on the basis of the agenda which may not provide continuity but would be practical and cost effective.

Kind regards

Christina Lewis
Head of Service- Early Years and Childcare

Response

The Early Years Service and its providers are a key partner in the new Safeguarding arrangements. They are named as a 'relevant agency' in the Suffolk Safeguarding Partnership Arrangements where it states - 'Early Years Settings Including private and voluntary sector providers, childminders and after school clubs, this is a large but important sector to include in the Partnership. Will be represented by the Director of Children Services on the Board and at the three locality safeguarding network meetings'

It is important that a member of the service continues to feed into the Policy and Procedure element of the Learning and Improvement Group, either by attending the monthly meetings or by choosing which ones to attend by looking at the agendas. Currently EY colleagues do not attend the quarterly locality meetings but we would encourage you to do so in the future and we can work with you to ensure that you contribute to the agendas and the meetings are of value to your service.

These look really good – my only observation would be on the report template, should the section say “proposed changes needed” as opposed to “changes needed”.

Just a thought, but I don’t mind if this isn’t the consensus!

Best wishes

Dave Giles - Suffolk Police

Response

Thank you for your feedback and support David, you are right, we will change the template

The Agendas and Reports note – makes sense and will make meetings more targeted and focussed.

The Agenda template will take time for attendees to adjust, but again it should focus the mind.

The Report template – will encourage a change of culture and brevity of reporting.

New Partnership set-up - I think the new structure will help with the changes of culture and systems thinking processes that we are taking forward. We are all working to the same aims for the people of Suffolk, whether they are adults or children – so it makes sense to share resources and experience. Often at the different subject meetings we attend, the same people are there so it would make sense to bring workstreams together or at least align them more closely.

As far as the Training & Development Group is concerned, I am happy to hand over the role of Chair to a new incumbent of the newly merged Policy, Practice & Training Subgroup (Joint) and I look forward to assisting, as needed, as the work of this group moves forward.

Lesley Crompton Trading Standards – chair of SAB training subgroup

Response

Thank you for your feedback and support Lesley

Agree that changes are functional, especially the joint, meetings are appropriate to strategically bring the delivery and experience of care by patients and their families, including practice by practitioners across the system.

If we are joint up strategically, this can only be positive to enable the system to think across boundaries.

Kind Regards

Beulah Chizimba| Designated Nurse Lead Children in Care

Response

Thank you for your feedback and support Beulah.