

HWLG(3)-SCB010-Carmarthenshire Safeguarding Children Board
Health, Wellbeing and Local Government Committee
Inquiry into Local Safeguarding Children Boards in Wales - Evidence
from Carmarthenshire Safeguarding Children Board

Health, Wellbeing and Local Government Committee

Evidence to be presented to the inquiry into Local Safeguarding Children Boards (LSCB) in Wales

This paper is being presented to the Inquiry into LSCBs in Wales to provide evidence of the effectiveness of LSCBs in Wales.

The committee is asked to consider the evidence and recommendations made within the paper.

Background

Carmarthenshire Safeguarding Children Board has undertaken a consultation with statutory agencies to gather the views and evidence of member agencies regarding the areas outlined in the terms of reference of the Inquiry into LSCBs in Wales.

The result of the Self Assessment and Improvement Toolkit for Carmarthenshire Safeguarding Children Board has also been used to support the views and evidence of member agencies.

Summary / Recommendations

The existing Welsh Government Policy and guidance that relates to LSCB's has been useful in establishing the terms of reference, structures, membership and strategic vision of LSCBs across Wales.

There are a number of areas where guidance and policy need to be strengthened to increase the effectiveness of LSCBs across Wales.

Carmarthenshire Safeguarding Children Board recommends that the following areas of guidance are strengthened:

- a) Financial contributions of Statutory Members of Local Safeguarding Children Boards
- b) The accountabilities of LSCB and Partnerships regarding elements of safeguarding and promoting the welfare of children

Carmarthenshire Safeguarding Children Board recommends that the following areas of policy are strengthened:

- a) Financial contributions of Statutory Members of Local Safeguarding Children Boards
- b) Scrutiny and intervention powers
- c) Requirements to involve Adult Social Services, Adult Health Services and further education and 6th form colleges in the work of the Local Safeguarding Children Board.

Evidence submitted to the Inquiry into LSCBs

1. Appropriateness of existing Welsh Government Policy and Guidance as relevant to LSCBs;

The existing Welsh Assembly Government Guidance is currently unclear regarding the financial contributions of statutory agencies and could include more robust powers of scrutiny and intervention.

Carmarthenshire Safeguarding Children Board would welcome greater clarity regarding contributions towards a pooled budget, and towards the management, administration and work of the LSCB.

The current situation for LSCBs is that they are funded in the majority by the Local Authority with small short term financial contributions from other partner agencies. This hampers long term financial planning and means that LSCBs are in the main, reliant on the goodwill of professionals in partner agencies to deliver the statutory functions of the LSCB. A national funding formula is needed to enable long term multi agency LSCB budgets to be set which is adequate to meet the statutory functions of the LSCB.

Carmarthenshire Safeguarding Children Board would also welcome more robust powers regarding the scrutiny of the effectiveness of arrangements to Safeguard and Promote the Welfare of Children in all statutory agencies. The Board would value more robust powers to intervene as a multi agency body where areas of improvement are identified through scrutiny.

With robust powers of scrutiny and intervention LSCBs would become more effective as agents of improving services around Safeguarding and Promoting the Welfare of Children.

2. Appropriateness of the scope and focus of LSCB responsibilities;

The consensus of Carmarthenshire Safeguarding Children Board is that the scope and focus of LSCB responsibilities should have greater focus on child protection. The broader safeguarding agenda should be managed by agreement with partnerships.

The accountabilities for each element of safeguarding and promoting the welfare of children should be agreed between the LSCB and each of the partnerships. The LSCB would retain responsibility for all elements of Safeguarding but would hold other partnerships to account regarding the agreed accountabilities for elements of Safeguarding.

The tables contained in Appendix A have been useful for beginning discussions regarding these accountabilities but the existence of these tables within guidance would strengthen cross partnership working further.

These tables need to be updated to include child trafficking, unaccompanied asylum seeking children, black and minority ethnic children, and children with a disability. Further tables need to be developed regarding accountabilities of Adult Protection Committees and MAPPA.

3. Membership of LSCBs with reference to both the role of statutory partners and also the voluntary sector and smaller / specialist organisations;

Arrangements regarding membership with CAF/CASS Cymru are working well. There does need to be a strengthening of requirements to involve other agencies in the work of the LSCB particularly around adult social services, adult health services and further education and 6th form colleges.

The involvement of adult social services and adult health services is particularly important with regard to the impact of domestic abuse, substance misuse and parental mental health on the capacity to parent. These have been shown to be high risk factors regarding child protection issues.

The role of the Voluntary Sector, Community based and Faith based organisations is vital to the function of the LSCB. The third sector provides vital services to children and families. Therefore membership is needed on LSCBs to ensure that arrangements to safeguard and promote the welfare of children are effective in these organisations. Membership of the LSCB is also useful in raising awareness amongst statutory members, of the services that the third sector can provide. Whether or not the requirement for the Voluntary Sector, Community based and Faith based organisations membership of the LSCB needs to be strengthened in guidance is open for debate. In Carmarthenshire there is further work needed to strengthen the membership on the LSCB from the third sector.

4. Arrangements for funding LSCBs;

Carmarthenshire Safeguarding Children Board strongly state there is a need for very clear and robust arrangements for the funding of LSCB's. There needs to be a statutory duty for all statutory agencies to make financial contributions. There should be a nationally set contribution from each agency based on a formula of population and need. This should allow for an estimated funding of £120,000 per LSCB.

The funding of LSCBs directly affects their ability to function effectively.

The current situation for LSCBs is that they are funded in the majority by the Local Authority with small, short term financial contributions from other partner agencies. This hampers long term financial planning and means that LSCBs are in the main, reliant on the goodwill of professionals in partner agencies to deliver the statutory functions of the LSCB. A national funding formula is needed to enable long term multi agency LSCB budgets to be set which is adequate to meet the statutory functions of the LSCB.

5. The relationship of LSCBs to other local partnerships, including Children and Young People's Partnerships; Community Safety Partnerships; Local Service Boards; the planned Integrated Family Support Teams.

Carmarthenshire Safeguarding Children Board has a clear and shared understanding of its responsibilities in relation to child protection activity.

There is cross membership of partnerships which ensures that each partnership is aware of the Safeguarding and Promoting the Welfare of Children Agenda.

Further work is needed to develop a clear and shared understanding of which elements of safeguarding the LSCB is accountable for and for which it is holding others to account. This applies to both a clear and shared understanding by Carmarthenshire Safeguarding Children Board member agencies and between partnerships.

There needs to be further development around more formalised reporting and accountability structures between partnerships. It was agreed that there were strong partnership links at an Executive level but that these needed further development at an operational level to ensure that understanding of the Safeguarding Agenda is shared at all levels.

See comments at Section 2 and Appendix A.

6. The effectiveness of LSCBs in promoting the protection and welfare of specific groups of vulnerable children such as children with disabilities, asylum seeker and trafficked children, black and minority ethnic children;

Carmarthenshire Safeguarding Children Board is actively working together through specific objectives for specific groups of vulnerable children in the Business Plan but these tend to focus on outputs rather than outcomes.

7. The effectiveness of LSCBs in their specific role with regard to promoting the information sharing responsibilities and duties of LSCB partner agencies;

The effectiveness of LSCB's in these areas would be improved by robust powers regarding the scrutiny of the effectiveness of arrangements to Safeguard and Promote the Welfare of Children in all statutory agencies.

8. The effectiveness of LSCBs in involving children and young people in their work.

This is a significant area for improvement and is an integral element of the work of LSCBs.

There are clear actions within the Carmarthenshire Safeguarding Children Board Business Plan regarding the development of a consultation strategy for children, young people and parents/carers.

Carmarthenshire Safeguarding Children Board needs to develop complaints procedures in relation to user's experiences of its policies and procedures.

Conclusions

The establishment of LSCB's in Wales is relatively recent. There is recognition by LSCBs that the agenda of Safeguarding and Promoting the Welfare of Children will take at least 10 years to implement.

The initial focus of LSCBs has been establishing terms of reference, structures, membership and strategic vision.

The focus of the LSCBs in Wales along with the Welsh Assembly Government should now be the removal of the barriers to effectiveness and a drive for continuous improvement in the effectiveness of LSCBs through the Self Assessment and Improvement Toolkit developed with the CSSIW.

The major barriers for Carmarthenshire Safeguarding Children Board are insecure financial arrangements and insufficient powers of scrutiny and intervention. These barriers can be overcome by increased clarity through strengthened guidance, policy and if necessary legislation from the Welsh Assembly Government.

The Self Assessment and Improvement Toolkit has been useful in identifying areas for improvement and along with action plans to address these areas of improvement, will improve the effectiveness of LSCBs. Carmarthenshire Safeguarding Children Board wholeheartedly support this approach to continuous improvement in the effectiveness of LSCBs.

Recommendations

- 1. The Welsh Assembly Government should strengthen policy and guidance around financial contributions to LSCB for all statutory agencies by setting a national funding formula based on population and need. This should allow for an estimated funding of £120,000 per LSCB.**
- 2. The Welsh Assembly Government should strengthen guidance to outline the accountabilities of the LSCB and Partnerships regarding the elements of Safeguarding and Promoting the Welfare of Children.**
- 3. The Welsh Assembly Government should strengthen policy and guidance to increase the powers of LSCB to scrutinise the arrangements to Safeguard and Promote the Welfare of Children and intervene where necessary.**
- 4. The Welsh Assembly Government should strengthen policy and guidance to make requirements to involve Adult Social Services, Adult Health Services and further education and 6th form colleges in the work of the LSCB.**

Appendix A Tasks and Accountabilities of LSCB's and Partnerships regarding Safeguarding and Promoting the Welfare of Children

Strategic Lead - LSCBs

	Role of LSCB
Protection of children who are suffering significant harm or who are at risk of suffering significant harm, as a result of abuse or neglect within the home/family	Agree thresholds for intervention. Procedures Protocols Awareness raising Undertake SCRs
Protection of children from stranger abuse	
Protection of children from peer abuse	
Protection of children from sexual exploitation	
Child Protection enquiries	
Internet safety - grooming and sexual exploitation/abuse	
Internet safety - access to pornography and abusive images	
Internet safety - inappropriate "chat"	
Safety in care settings	
Safety in private foster care	
Serious Case Reviews	
Child Death Reviews (subject to ongoing work)	
Inter-agency protocols, incl: information sharing conduct of s47 inquiries complaints about CP conferences working arrangements with CSSIW.	
Awareness Raising	
Procedures to co-ordinate action	
Review of measures taken by partner agencies	
Performance measurement of children's service plan - safeguarding element	
Information about best practice	
Research into safeguarding	
Inter-agency training	

Strategic Lead - Children and Young People's Partnerships

	Role of LSCB
Safety in school	Receive reports. Monitor Evaluate safeguard aspects of CYP Plan
Access to advice and guidance	
Access to advocacy services	
Access to welfare services	
Access to education services	

Strategic Lead - Role of Community Safety Partnerships

	Role of LSCB
Road safety	Receive reports. Monitor
Safety at home (excluding abuse and neglect)	
Safety at play	
Protection from bullying	
Safety from crime	
Safety from violence	
Safety in the community	
Protection from substance misuse	
Protection from domestic abuse	

Strategic Lead - Health, Social Care and Well-Being Partnerships

	Role of LSCB
Safety in health settings	Receive reports Monitor
Health promotion (including mental health promotion)	
Access to preventative health services	
Access to primary health services	
Healthy eating	

Clearly there are not always clear cut boundaries. For example, in relation to "safety from crime" the Community Safety Partnership will, in general, have the lead role. However where crime involves the abuse of children through abuse or neglect, sexual exploitation, forced marriage, etc, the LSCB will, at a minimum have shared responsibility or may take the lead (for example in the development of inter-agency procedures and protocols).