

 Executive – 14 September 2011		Agenda Item No. 12
Title	Safeguarding Children Action Plan	
For further information about this report please contact	Bill Hunt Deputy Chief Executive 01926 456014 bill.hunt@warwickdc.gov.uk	
Wards of the District directly affected	All	
Is the report private and confidential and not for publication by virtue of a paragraph of schedule 12A of the Local Government Act 1972, following the Local Government (Access to Information) (Variation) Order 2006?	No	
Date and meeting when issue was last considered and relevant minute number	n/a	
Background Papers	Section 11 Audit papers, Warwickshire Safeguarding Children Board papers and minutes, particularly 25 May 2011 report – WSCB Audit of Compliance with Section 11 of the Children Act 2004, Statutory Guidance, DCSF Challenge and Improvement Tool	

Contrary to the policy framework:	No
Contrary to the budgetary framework:	No
Key Decision?	No
Included within the Forward Plan? (If yes include reference number)	Yes
Equality & Sustainability Impact Assessment Undertaken	No
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Officer/Councillor Approval		
Officer Approval	Date	Name
Deputy Chief Executive		Author
Head of Service	4/8/11	All
CMT	19/8/11	Chris Elliott, Andrew Jones, Bill Hunt
Section 151 Officer	4/8/11	Mike Snow
Monitoring Officer	18/8/11	Andy Jones
Finance		Mike Snow
Portfolio Holder(s)	19/7/11	Cllr. Doody and Cllr. Caborn
Consultation & Community Engagement		
n/a		
Final Decision?		Yes
Suggested next steps (if not final decision please set out below)		

1. SUMMARY

- 1.1 The purpose of this report is to advise members of the outcome of the audit of this Council's compliance with its statutory safeguarding responsibilities, as set out in Section 11 of the Children Act 2004 and to seek approval for an Action Plan to address issues arising from that audit, in order to strengthen our safeguarding activities.

2. RECOMMENDATION

- 2.1 That Executive note the audit response submitted to the Warwickshire Safeguarding Children Board (WSCB) as set out at Appendix One.
- 2.2 That Executive approve the draft Action Plan as set out at Appendix Two.
- 2.3 That Executive approve the future use of the Central Training Budget, if required, to cover any costs associated with maintaining service provision at leisure centres to allow operational staff to be trained.
- 2.4 That Executive nominate the Culture Portfolio Holder to act as the Council's member Safeguarding Children Champion.
- 2.5 That Executive delegate authority to the Deputy Chief Executive (BH), in consultation with the member Safeguarding Children Champion, to amend the Action Plan as appropriate, following discussion with the other district and borough council's via the WSCB District Council Sub-Committee.
- 2.6 That, subject to the agreement of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee, progress in delivering the Action Plan is monitored by that Committee.

3. REASONS FOR THE RECOMMENDATION

- 3.1 The audit was undertaken at the request of the Independent Chair of WSCB by all the Board's partner agencies and organisations to assess their level of compliance with Section 11 of the Children Act 2004. This key legislative provision is concerned with the infrastructure which agencies need to have in place in order to be able to deliver their specific responsibilities in relation to safeguarding children.
- 3.2 Each agency completed a template, tailored to their specific role and function in relation to safeguarding children, drawing on the requirements set out in statutory guidance relating to Section 11.
- 3.3 This Council's response, set out at **Appendix One**, was considered by the Senior Management Team and formally 'signed off' by the Corporate Management Team prior to submission in April 2011.
- 3.4 The WSCB received a report at its 25 May 2011 meeting summarising the outcome of the audit. It concluded that, overall, all partner agencies and organisations, including this Council, have sound arrangements in place for safeguarding children and are compliant with the requirements of Section 11. It also noted that the new statutory partners named in the Children Act 2004 (District Councils, Connexions, Youth Justice Service and newer health organisations formed after reconfigurations of services post 2004) have made significant strides, which it felt was very noteworthy given that it was necessary

for each organisation to construct foundations from scratch, whereas members of the old Area Child Protection Committee (forerunner of the WSCB) had already had these in place for many years.

- 3.5 The Board also agreed that each agency and organisation should construct an Action Plan enabling them to bring together and monitor implementation of those areas for development which they identified within their audit return and any other aspects which, on further reflection, they felt might be useful to develop. The Board intends to monitor these Actions Plans through its Quality & Information Sub-Committee. This Council's draft Action Plan is set out at **Appendix Two** for approval.
- 3.6 Members will note that a key element of the Action Plan relates to staff training and the need for this to be co-ordinated at a corporate rather than a service area level. Work is already underway on this element of the plan and all posts that require appropriate training have been identified. As part of this exercise a concern has emerged that the operational needs of certain key functions, e.g. leisure centres, might, depending on how the training is delivered potentially be compromised by the need to send staff off-site to be trained.
- 3.7 At its August meeting Executive approved the establishment of a Central Training Budget. It is therefore recommended that this budget is utilised to cover any costs that might arise from the need to provide appropriate staff cover to enable training to be completed. Any potential call on this budget will be minimised as far as possible through the central co-ordination of the training programme.
- 3.8 In focussing on the infrastructure to ensure the delivery of our statutory safeguarding responsibilities the audit highlighted that whilst we generally have sound structures in place, these are better developed on the officer side of the organisation than on the member side. As part of our response in addressing this it is recommended that the Culture Portfolio Holder takes on the role of elected member Safeguarding Children 'Champion', to complement the role of the Deputy Chief Executive (BH) who already acts as the Council's officer 'Champion'. It is recommended that the member Champion is a member of the Executive to ensure that the necessary corporate priority is given to the safeguarding agenda.
- 3.9 The WSCB also agreed at their May meeting that partner agencies with similar structures, roles and responsibilities in relation to safeguarding children should be encouraged to share their audit findings to identify examples of good practice that could be promoted more widely and ensure that common challenges are addressed in a consistent fashion through the Action Plans.
- 3.10 It is therefore possible that the draft Action Plan, that it is attached for Executive approval, may require subsequent amendment to reflect the outcomes of discussions that will take place at the WSCB's District Council Sub-Committee in regard to the best approach to 'common' issues. It is therefore recommended that authority to vary the Action Plan is delegated to the officer Champion (DCE -BH), in consultation with the member Champion.
- 3.11 Whether the Action Plan is amended or not it is recommended that it is subsequently monitored and scrutinised by the Overview and Scrutiny Committee and that this role is added to that Committee's Annual Work Plan. This will not only ensure that the Action Plan is delivered but also provide the

opportunity for a wider scrutiny of the Council's children's safeguarding functions.

4. POLICY FRAMEWORK

- 4.1 The Council's safeguarding functions in respect of children are primarily statutory requirements, as set out in the Children Act 2004 and associated statutory guidance.
- 4.2 The Act imposes a duty to co-operate on named organisations, including district councils, to improve children's well-being and lists the 5 intended outcomes of the well-being agenda as:
- Physical and Mental Health and Emotional Well-Being
 - Protection from Harm and Neglect
 - Education, Training and Recreation
 - Contribution to Society
 - Social and Economic Well-Being
- 4.3 Delivery of these outcomes is entirely consistent with delivery of the Council's Vision to make Warwick district a great place to live, work and visit and with the principles underpinning the Sustainable Community Strategy, designed to deliver that Vision.

5. BUDGETARY FRAMEWORK

- 5.1 Budgetary implications of the Action Plan are minimal as with one exception it can be delivered within existing staff resources and, where appropriate, existing budgets.
- 5.2 That exception is the potential call on the Central Training Budget as described at paragraph 3.6. The potential future call on this budget is unlikely to exceed a maximum of £5,000 for this financial year but this cost will be minimised as far as possible as described at paragraph 3.7. There is currently £10,000 unallocated in this budget for 2011/12.
- 5.3 The future use of this budget would only be to cover any costs associated with covering shifts of operational staff, if required, to allow them to attend training as, through its membership of WSCB, the Council can access free training.
- 5.4 There may be a potential recurrent call on this budget to accommodate cover for refresher training but this will be reviewed as part of the budget setting process.
- 5.5 The only other potential cost to the Council arises from non-attendance at a booked training event as the Board levies a charge which is then used to supplement the cost of its training programme.

6. ALTERNATIVE OPTION(S) CONSIDERED

- 6.1 As a named organisation within the Children Act and a member of the local Safeguarding Children Board the Council would not be complying with its statutory duties had it chosen not to undertake the audit or subsequently to formulate and deliver an Action Plan. However, Executive could choose to add or delete specific actions detailed within the draft Action Plan.

- 6.2 Executive could also choose not to establish a member 'Champion' for safeguarding children or to appoint such a member from outside of its own ranks. These options have been discounted on the basis that not having such a champion potentially weakens the Council's commitment to the safeguarding agenda, or could be perceived as doing so. Equally, not having a member of Executive undertaking this role could potentially limit the impact that the champion could have in ensuring the safeguarding agenda is given prominence and that their fellow Portfolio Holder's remain cognisant of our responsibilities and are ensuring that these are being delivered within each service area.
- 6.3 Executive could also choose to monitor delivery of the Action Plan through their own meetings but it is considered that this is better done through an all-party Scrutiny Committee.

7. BACKGROUND

- 7.1 The WSCB was established in 2004 specifically to meet the requirements of the Children Act. The Act widened the range of agencies and organisations that have statutory responsibilities for safeguarding children (a definition that includes all young adults up to the age of 18) beyond the core agencies within Social Care, Health and the Police that were previously represented on the old Area Child Protection Committees (ACPC).
- 7.2 Agencies represented on the WSCB are:
- Children's Services Authority (Warwickshire County Council)
 - Each District and Borough Council
 - Strategic Health Authority
 - Primary Care Trusts including each hospital within the area
 - Police authority
 - Local Probation Board
 - Youth Offending Team
 - Connexions (or successor organisation)
 - Prisons/Young Offender Institutions
- 7.3 The Council's representative on the Board is the Deputy Chief Executive (BH). It meets a minimum of 4 times per year although additional meetings will be called as necessary, for example to review major legislative change or to address the findings of a Serious Case Review. Between meetings the work of the Board is delivered through its 8 sub-committees (the number and remit of these sub-committees is currently being reviewed) each of which has its own Work Plan. Each sub-committee provides an update on progress against its Work Plan to the full Board every quarter and in addition their work is scrutinised and co-ordinated by a meeting, chaired by the independent Chair of the WSCB, of all Chair's of the sub-committees, also held quarterly as a minimum.
- 7.4 One of these sub-committees is specifically for district and borough councils in recognition of the commonality of the issues each faces in addressing its safeguarding responsibilities and of the need to share information, good practice and problem solving. It is this sub-committee that it is intended will review each Council's audit responses and Action Plans. This sub-committee is currently chaired by the Deputy Chief Executive.

- 7.5 Further information about the WSCB, including the free training programme offered to member organisations, is available through its website at:
<http://www.warwickshire.gov.uk/acpc>