

**PEER REVIEW OF LEICESTER SAFEGUARDING
CHILDREN BOARD**

**Final Report
April 2017**

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1 Introduction and Brief for the Peer Review

- 1 This report sets out the key findings and recommendations following a peer review of Leicester Safeguarding Children Board (LSCB).
- 2 The review was commissioned by the Chief Executive of Leicester City Council. The following brief was set for the review:
 - i. Provide an independent review of progress with the Board's programme of improvement, since the new Chair took up post, and overall since the inspection outcome of March 2015;
 - ii. Work with the Independent Chair, Board Members and LSCB Manager to identify further areas for development.
 - iii. Give views as to whether the LSCB is operating robustly and its readiness for transition of responsibilities from the Leicester City Children's Improvement Board (LCCIB)
- 3 John Harris was appointed as the peer reviewer in January 2017. He has recent and relevant experience in improving Children's Services and safeguarding through his national role with the Children's Improvement Board and as Children's Improvement Adviser for the Local Government Association in London and East of England. He is the Independent Chair of Doncaster LSCB and had a similar position with Sandwell LSCB until July 2016. John Harris was Director of Children's Services in Hertfordshire from 2003-2011.
- 4 The peer reviewer has considered 75 background documents provided by the LSCB Business Team and met 27 people for 1:1 interviews and focus groups. The peer review was very well organised by the LSCB Business Team.
- 5 The period covered by this review is from the Effectiveness Review by the Independent Chair in June 2016 until March 2017. It should be noted that, given the limitations of the focus, the findings in this report do not constitute a full assessment against the OFSTED framework for reviewing the effectiveness of LSCBs.

2 Background and Context

6 OFSTED Review of the Effectiveness Review of the LSCB

The OFSTED review of the effectiveness of Leicester LSCB in March 2015 assessed the Board as inadequate. The review highlighted the following key issues:

- the LSCB had only recently started to monitor frontline practice and was unaware of weaknesses in children's social care. There was a lack of effective scrutiny so agencies were not being held to account;
- limited performance data so the Board was unable to hold partners to account.
- limited evidence of robust challenge.

- lack of effective coordination of services. Board members were engaged, but not making an impact on frontline practice.
- the engagement with young people was at an early stage and the Board's work was not directly informed by the views of young people.
- there was insufficient evaluation of the impact of the early help offer.
- partner agencies were not clear about their early help responsibilities and referral thresholds were not well understood.
- the Board had not assessed the impact of a recent local authority restructuring of its children's workforce.
- there was limited audit activity within the partnership.
- the strategy for responding to child sexual exploitation (CSE) was at an early stage and it was too early to assess its impact. Training was not sufficiently targeted to ensure practitioners understand and act upon indicators of CSE.

7 Arising from the review, OFSTED identified the following key priority issues for immediate action:

- I. Establish and implement a robust performance management framework and dataset to enable the Board to scrutinise service effectiveness and outcomes for children.
- II. Monitor the effectiveness of statutory services and practice provided to children in need of help.
- III. Establish a clear line of sight and reporting from frontline practice to the Board so that concerns and challenges can be promptly addressed.

The following were key areas for improvement:

- i. Information to the Board should contain challenging analysis to enable members to identify key priority areas for improvement and generate an effective Business Plan.
- ii. Increase the number and frequency of multi-agency audits.
- iii. Establish a clear line of sight from frontline practice to the Board so challenges are more swiftly and accurately identified.
- iv. Produce an Annual Report in line with statutory requirements
- v. Evaluate the early help offer: partners' understanding and implementation of their responsibilities and understanding and application of thresholds
- vi. Evaluate the impact of CSE initiatives and make sure CSE strategy covers key areas: prevention, protection, prosecution and disruption.

8 **OFSTED Single Inspection – Leicester City – March 2015**

Inspectors found Children's Services to be inadequate overall, with particular concerns regarding the effectiveness of services for children in need of help and protection, and for leadership and management. Weaknesses that were in common with those found in the LSCB related to performance management, quality assurance and the lack of impact of strategic partnership working on frontline practice.

9 **Leicester City Children's Improvement Board**

Following the inspection, an Improvement Board with an independent chair and multi-agency senior membership was established to oversee an Improvement Plan in response to the Single Inspection. The evidence of the impact of the Board has been reflected in a series of positive monitoring reports from OFSTED, the latest of which, in January 2017, reported significant progress in tackling the weaknesses relating to services for children in need of help and protection. The local authority is anticipating a re-inspection early in the summer of 2017 and has recently revised and updated its Improvement Plan.

- 10 The LCCIB has modelled high expectations of its members in terms of contribution to Board meetings and wider implementation of the improvement plan, a focus on systemic issues such as understanding and application of thresholds, effective arrangements for performance management and quality assurance, and feedback from practitioners. In that regard, the LCCIB has provided a good benchmark for the LSCB in taking forward the improvements required after OFSTED's review. It is expected that the Improvement Board will give active consideration to the scope for and timing of the transfer of its functions to the LSCB in the light of the findings from this peer review.

11 **LSCB Effectiveness Review June 2016**

In parallel with the local authority's Improvement Plan, the LSCB reflected on the key findings in the immediate aftermath of OFSTED's review, and put in place its own Improvement Plan. The assessment of the progress and impact of the Board's original Improvement Plan is not within the remit of this review. Documentation seen by the reviewer, and the comments from people interviewed, all suggested that although there had been much hard work in the period from March 2015 up to the appointment of the new Independent Chair, the progress in tackling the key improvements required had been limited. It was against this backdrop that the Independent Chair, with the agreement of key partner agencies, led the LSCB Effectiveness Review in June 2016.

- 12 The Effectiveness Review involved a range of 1:1 meetings with Board Members and discussions with the Board's Business Team, observation of meetings and service visits. It culminated in a 'Big Conversation' development day with the Board at which Board members were able to identify positive features and areas for development of the Board in a 'safe space' where everyone's contribution was valued.
- 13 The Independent Chair set out proposals for change in a key strategic report approved by the Board, along with an Effectiveness Review Action Plan, which was implemented from July 2016. In her report the Chair noted: *'there are many positive elements of the Leicester LSCB...but in order to ensure continued improvement it should focus more on evidence of the impact and difference the local safeguarding services are making to children's lives...and those children and their families who require early help'*. The Effectiveness Action Plan covered ten key action points:

- i. a changed LSCB Constitution, sub-groups and Terms of Reference for sub-groups (see Appendix 1);
 - ii. revised Business Plan, linked to clear work programme through LSCB Executive Chairs Group and Joint Leicester, Leicestershire and Rutland (LLR) Executive, with progress reports to strategic Board;
 - iii. an updated Learning and Improvement Framework produced in line with *Working Together 2015*, intended to link the newly constituted Serious Incident Review Group (SIRG) with better triangulation with performance data, audit and quality assurance from the newly formed Performance Analysis and Assurance Group (PAAG);
 - iv. Board membership to mirror the seniority of the LCCIB so that the LCSB is in a position to take on responsibilities from the LCCIB;
 - v. a wider group of members to take responsibility for specific work streams from the business plan, to ensure wider active ownership, understanding and contribution to vision, and to champion the work of the Board;
 - vi. the Board administration to be managed and coordinated more effectively, with effective tracking of actions from Board meetings and sub-groups, and progress reported in a timely way;
 - vii. an improved Board website;
 - viii. review the role and job description of the Board Business Team policy officer to reflect new and future Board priorities and demands;
 - ix. recruit a permanent Business Manager;
 - x. Commission a Peer Review to assess progress and impact of changes following the Effectiveness Review
- 14 The Independent Chair highlighted seven key success indicators arising from the Effectiveness Review:
- i. Evidence of Board members holding each other to account
 - ii. Annual Report – rigorous assessment of achievements, weaknesses, and causes of weaknesses
 - iii. Dissemination of lessons from practice and improvement to managers and frontline, with evidence of differences in operational practice
 - iv. Emerging themes and risks in multi-agency system identified and acted upon
 - v. Celebration of success and innovation in practice improvements
 - vi. Effective engagement of children, frontline practitioners and managers to ensure voice of child influences planning of services and practice improvements
 - vii. Feedback from audits and reviews captures individual journey of children through local safeguarding system so Board knows difference it is making to children and the impact on outcomes.
- 15 The Board has developed a more extended Business Plan covering the period September 2016 – March 2018. The Plan takes due account of the wider priorities for improving outcomes for children and young people found in the LLR Joint Strategic Needs Assessment (JSNA) and the Children and Young People’s Plan overseen by the Children’s Trust. It includes five overarching safeguarding outcome statements for children, young people and families, against which the difference being made by the

Board can be evaluated. The Business Plan is being taken forward by the Chairs' Executive group and sub-groups. The Business Plan is based on four key priorities:

- i. The LSCB is to be assured that there is evidence to consistently demonstrate that children and young people are effectively safeguarded
- ii. To be assured that 'Early Help' services are accessed and delivered effectively and thresholds are understood and consistently applied.
- iii. The LSCB is to be assured that there is a culture and continuous system of multi-agency learning and improvement.
- iv. The LSCB is to continue to improve its governance, performance and QA processes and to be assured of the effectiveness of the LSCB

The reviewer has evaluated the progress of the Effectiveness Action Plan and the Business Plan as part of the key findings from the peer review.

16 Joint Arrangements across LLR

A number of the LSCB's functions are carried out through joint arrangements across LLR and in partnership with the Leicestershire and Rutland LSCB. These include Learning and Development, the Child Death Overview Panel, and joint strategies in areas such as CSE. A Joint Executive Group ensures strategic oversight of these arrangements and promotes opportunities for further development through joint working.

3 Summary Findings and Recommendations

- 17 Significant progress has been made since the Effectiveness Review in June 2016. The Board has benefitted from highly effective leadership of change by the Independent Chair. A more robust, systematic and purposeful programme of work is enabling the Board to cover its statutory functions and address key priorities to improve the effectiveness of safeguarding in Leicester. There is an improved culture of challenge, accountability, and joint working across the partnership and at all levels. Stronger systems have been established for scrutiny, performance management and quality assurance. There is now improved alignment between the Board's strategic activity and the priorities and concerns of young people and frontline practitioners. Partner agencies report a more confident, optimistic and outcome-oriented partnership. Good use is being made of joint arrangements across LLR to improve the effectiveness of Board functions and to respond to key safeguarding risks.
- 18 Leicester LSCB has now laid the foundations for assuming responsibilities from the Improvement Board through phased transitional arrangements. The key challenge over the next six months is to demonstrate the impact of better Board working in improved multi-agency responses to key safeguarding risks. In the medium term it will be important to put in place effective local multi-agency safeguarding arrangements in response to the provisions in the Children and Social Work Act and associated statutory guidance.

- 19 In order to build on the significant progress to date, the Board should consider the following recommendations:

Recommendation 1

Revise and update the Business Plan with a more streamlined set of activities linked to the Board's core purpose, a clearer set of outcome measures and sharper evaluation of impact.

Recommendation 2

Strengthen the evaluation of the impact of Learning and Development, drawing on findings from single and multi-agency audits.

Recommendation 3

Bring together evidence of the Board's impact through the development of quality matrices linked to the Business Plan priorities, and prepare a sample evaluative case studies to show the impact of the Board's work from the perspective of practitioners, children and families, and partner agencies.

Recommendation 4

The LCCIB should remit a key theme to the LSCB for it to demonstrate its proven capacity to improve and assume full system –wide responsibilities.

Recommendation 5

Establish system-wide impact measures for the work of the Board using, for example, standing quality assurance questions relating to key processes (e.g. understanding and application of thresholds) or key safeguarding risks (e.g. CSE, Neglect, Domestic Abuse).

4 Detailed Findings

Vision, Strategy and Leadership

- 20 The new Chair has demonstrated rigour, challenge, highly effective leadership of change and is making a real difference through personal impact and increasingly dispersed leadership. The Effectiveness Review was well-led by the Chair, with an inclusive process that set the tone for a culture of openness, challenge and support which has continued as the Board has taken forward developments. Partner agencies are making a good contribution to the leadership of the Board through the Chairs' Executive Group and the new structure of sub-groups. Progress with the work programmes in most sub-groups is good, notably in the PAAG and SIRC sub-groups. Board members and practitioners report a better experience of working with the Board.
- 21 The Board has set out a clear, outcome-focused, child-centred vision in its new Business Plan. This has been important in framing a new sense of purpose and direction for Board members, partner agencies and practitioners. The vision is underpinned by appropriate priorities to address improvement in the effectiveness of

the Board overall and in relation to key safeguarding issues in Leicester. There has been positive progress in the delivery of most of the objectives covered in the Business Plan although it will be important to ensure that the Board tracks the impact of the Plan, rather than the completion of proposed actions in the plan, when it evaluates progress. The Business Plan would benefit from a simplification of the outcome measures in the plan. One way to achieve this would be to develop quality matrices for each of the four priorities, comprising a combination of performance indicators drawn from the agreed Board dataset, qualitative information from audits and deep dives, practitioner and user feedback. Consideration should also be given to reducing the number of objectives and areas for action, particularly in respect of Priority 1, to ensure a sustainable programme of work for the Board and the partnership.

- 22 Stronger connections have been established with other partnerships in Leicester and wider partnership working across LLR. There is now greater cohesion between the Health and Well-Being Board, the Children's Trust, the Safer Leicester Partnership and the LSCB. As a result it is clearer where lead responsibilities lie in promoting and coordinating the response to key safeguarding issues. The scrutiny, assurance and challenge role of the LSCB is better defined and understood. This has been shown recently in the re-alignment of Executive and Operational functions in relation to the CSE strategy across LLR and a similar approach is now being taken forward in relation to domestic violence.
- 23 The LSCB is becoming more confident, authoritative and influential in its work, seen for example in the way that the learning from its multi-agency audits is being used; its championing of important issues such as the emotional health and well-being of children and young people; and in the improvement of provision, for example the response to neglect and the introduction of the CSE Hub arrangements.

Working Together 2015 Compliance

- 24 In large part the current work of the LSCB is now meeting the requirements of *Working Together 2015*. The Board meets statutory requirements in terms of membership. There is a well-defined Constitution that sets out roles and responsibilities of the Board, Chairs' Executive Group and sub-groups covering the full range of LSCB functions. There are clear expectations set for individual Board members. Attendance by partner agencies at the Board has improved and is now good, as is participation in the sub-groups.
- 25 Business support for the work of the Board has improved markedly. Board and sub-group reports and minutes are of higher quality, enabling improved discussion and decision-making. There is good tracking and follow-up from meetings. The system of highlight reports is enabling a better links between the sub-groups, the Chairs' Executive and the Board. There is a sense of pace, purpose and operational grip. Board members report that they now understand the business better as it is linked to the business plan and a recognisable business cycle.

- 26 There is a clear framework of accountability for the Independent Chair with the local authority Chief Executive. The Lead Member for Children is playing a full part as a participant observer on the Board. Two new lay members have been appointed and they are complementing the emphasis from the Independent Chair and Lead Member on looking at issues 'through the eyes of the child and young person'. Partner agencies are serious about their safeguarding duties and have recently completed updated Section 11 audits. A summary of themes from those audits is due to be considered by the PAAG in May. Links between the LSCB and other partnerships are covered by agreed protocols. There are good links with voluntary and community sector organisations, who play a full part in the work of the Board.
- 27 The Board has recently updated its Learning and Improvement Framework, which is a single framework for the LLR area. Revised processes overseen by SIRG ensure that the Board fulfils its responsibilities in respect of case reviews and single agency reviews of serious incidents. Child death review processes are conducted well by the LLR CDOP. There is a comprehensive programme of learning and development across the LLR area.
- 28 The Board's Annual Report for 2016 is compliant with statutory requirements. The Board has an increasing understanding of key strengths and areas for development with safeguarding in Leicester and it will be important to reflect this in the 2017 Annual Report.
- 29 The Board's responsibilities in relation to thresholds and early help have been exercised through the LCCIB. As part of the transfer of responsibilities from the LCCIB, the LSCB needs to have its own evidence about the understanding and application of thresholds and the effectiveness of early help (both of which were key weaknesses in the Board's work at the time of the OFSTED review in 2015).

Accountability and Challenge

- 30 Board members report a stronger culture of accountability through Board meetings, the Chairs' Executive Group and the work in sub-groups. This is an aspect that the Independent Chair has modelled and which is now being adopted more confidently and frequently by other Board members and practitioners. There is more acceptance of respectful challenge and an expectation that it is part of the business.
- 31 During the peer review many examples of accountability and challenge were provided by participants in their interviews and focus group discussions. They show that challenge in particular is taking place across the full range of Board processes. Examples included:
 - i. challenging the arrangements for the oversight of the CSE strategy in LLR. The result was the creation of Executive and Operational Groups for the promotion and coordination of the CSE strategy, with the LSCBs undertaking a scrutiny and assurance role.

- ii. LSCB Board discussion of the report on CAMHS provision by the Care Quality Commission, with robust challenge of the Improvement Plan by Leicester Partnership Trust;
- iii. Case Review discussions at SIRG meetings;
- iv. Consideration of the Board's performance data by the PAAG and at the Chairs' Executive Group;
- v. Board discussion about the quality and impact of the response to domestic violence.
- vi. Increasing confidence in the use of escalation processes by practitioners.

Performance Management and Quality Assurance

- 32 There have been substantial improvements in performance management and quality assurance, building on the framework and expectations set by the LCCIB. The PAAG has been established and is an increasingly effective group with oversight of performance and quality. The PAAG receives and reviews a quarterly multi-agency dataset with increasingly evaluative commentaries on the individual indicators. The performance report highlights key areas of concern for extended discussion at the PAAG meeting and further consideration at the Chairs' Executive Group. The report also highlights good performance for celebration.
- 33 The PAAG meetings include formal consideration of agency highlight reports on key safeguarding processes. These enable swift consideration of practice concerns and feedback to service managers, with scope for escalation as necessary.
- 34 There is an increasingly rigorous multi-agency audit programme. Over the period covered by this review it is evident that the quality of the Board's audit processes and reports has improved. The areas of focus for the audits are now being initiated in response to issues emerging from performance reports and areas identified for practice improvement (for example, in managing the assessment of CSE risk and casework processes). The audits themselves include a larger case sample and more systemic recommendations. Practitioners and managers value highly the audit summaries, which draw out the learning from the audits but also direct practitioners to further reading and research to deepen their knowledge and understanding.
- 35 The Board is using well the insights into performance through partner agency risk updates at Board meetings, troubleshooting discussions at the Safeguarding Practitioners Group and reports from 'floor walking' by Board members.
- 36 At the moment the evaluations in the Board performance report relate in the main to individual performance indicators. An area for future development will be to bring together the information from performance and audit reports into a single performance commentary so that the Board is able to present a 'big picture' view about strengths and areas for development across the safeguarding system in Leicester as a whole. This approach would be aided by the development of quality matrices linked to the Business Plan priorities, and by establishing standing quality

assurance questions in relation to key safeguarding themes such as CSE or thresholds that the Board would keep under regular review.

Learning and Improvement

- 37 A comprehensive updated framework for Learning and Improvement across LLR has recently been agreed. It incorporates learning from case reviews, child death reviews and audit processes alongside the analysis of performance information within an integrated performance and assurance cycle. It will be essential for the Board to ensure that the various component processes do operate as part of an assurance cycle rather than learning and improvement 'episodes'.
- 38 The Board is demonstrating good commitment to learning and improvement. There is routine and systematic dissemination of learning from case reviews and audits. The SIRG has prepared a synthesis of key cross-cutting themes from the seven most recent serious case reviews undertaken by the Board. There is more systematic tracking of progress with action plans from case reviews. The CDOP has recently published a six-year review of child deaths and has identified from it a number of modifiable factors where it will focus its campaigning work. Learning from audits and reviews is informing the LLR learning and development programme.
- 39 There is a well-established and systematic framework for multi-agency safeguarding training across the LLR area. The framework was updated in June 2015 and includes: an overall training strategy; a competency framework for the children's workforce, differentiated according to role and organisational context; clear processes for needs analysis and updating of the multi-agency training offer; and detailed quarterly and annual performance reports, including evaluation of the impact of training by individual practitioners.
- 40 The current arrangements for evaluating the impact of training provide very good evidence from self-reports by participants. The evaluation of the impact of training would be strengthened, however, by drawing on the findings from single and multi-agency audits.

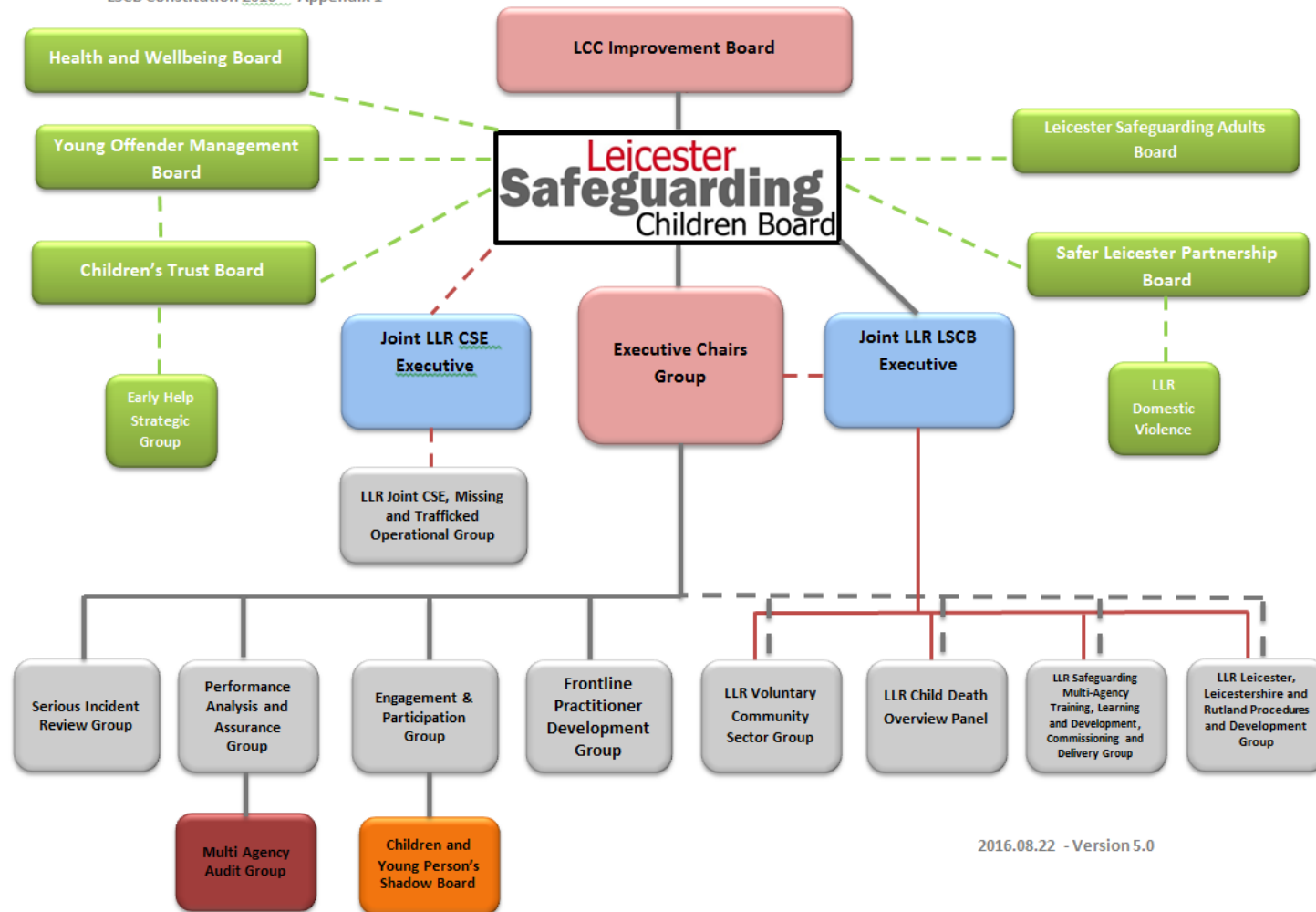
Engagement of Practitioners, Children and Young People

- 41 Leicester has well-established arrangements for promoting children and young people's participation through its Youth Council and school councils for younger children. The council also makes good use of the 'young advisers' model, in which young people are 'commissioned' to carry out particular pieces of work with services, projects, and partnerships. The LSCB has made good use of these arrangements to promote more meaningful engagement with young people by the Board.
- 42 The Board as a whole has had a development session about promoting effective children and young people's participation. Board members evaluated the position of their own agency on the 'ladder of participation' and considered individual agency plans for improving children and young people's participation.

- 43 The Board has commissioned Young Advisers for specific pieces of work, including a critique of the new Board website, producing a guide for young people on the role of the LSCB and a young people's version of the Business Plan.
- 44 Board members now report that there is greater emphasis on the 'voice of the child' in Board discussions, with the impact of key practice and performance issues considered on the basis of the experiences of children and families.
- 45 The Board's Engagement and Participation Group has suffered from inconsistent attendance but the chair of the group is now more confident that a purposeful work programme is in place. It is planned to hold a Children and Young People's Summit linked to the Board's safeguarding priorities later in the year.
- 46 The Multi-Agency Safeguarding Practitioner Forum now has increasing focus and purpose after a slow start and is now meeting regularly. Agendas combine discussion of key themes arising from performance or audit reports with opportunities for 'trouble shooting' in relation to concerns raised by practitioners. Feedback from those discussions is considered at the Chairs' Executive Group and relayed direct to service managers. The Board has been able to gauge the impact of developments such as its Neglect Training and Toolkit as well as hear first-hand about issues important to practitioners such as supervision.

5 Conclusion

- 47 The progress since the Effectiveness Review has been impressive. Work has progressed at an accelerated pace as the Board has been running to catch up to reach a position that might be expected just over two years on from OFSTED's review. Much of the improvement is evident in the last six months. It will be important to ensure that the scale and pace of work continues to be sustainable; prioritisation is therefore essential. The Board also needs to be able demonstrate that the impact of better Board working is reflected in terms of outcomes for children and young people. Recommendations 1 and 3 in particular address these points.
- 48 The Board is now well placed to take over responsibilities from the LCCIB at some point over the next twelve months. The transition needs to take place in a planned way. One way to do this would be through the LCCIB remitting to the LSCB a key theme through which the Board could demonstrate its proven capacity to improve and assume system-wide responsibilities.
- 49 Overall, there is greater confidence in the ability of the LSCB, through its processes, to have an accurate understanding of the strengths and areas for development in safeguarding in Leicester, and to be able to take early action with partners to tackle weaknesses in performance in any of the partner agencies.
- 50 The well-established joint working across LLR, including the Joint Executive, provide a good basis for developing any changes to local safeguarding arrangements following the Children and Social Work Act.



2016.08.22 - Version 5.0