

# The Area Partnerships and Safeguarding

## Safeguarding children is everyone's responsibility

– Statutory Guidance on Section 11, page 9.

Nobody would disagree with this statement. But what does it actually mean in practice for Surrey's four Area Partnerships? Under s 11 of the Children Act 2004 a number of authorities, list below,\* have a duty to ensure:

“(a) their functions are discharged having regard to the need to safeguard and promote the welfare of children; and

(b) any services provided by another person pursuant to arrangements made by the person or body in the discharge of their functions are provided having regard to that need.”

### What is meant by Safeguarding?

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In 2006 the Government published, “*Making Safeguarding Everyone's Business.*” This document makes it clear that when the Government refers to safeguarding they mean “safeguarding and promoting welfare” and taken together this means:

- protecting children from maltreatment;
- preventing impairment of children's health or development; and
- ensuring that children are growing up in circumstances consistent with the provision of safe and effective care and undertaking that role so as to enable those children to have optimum life chances such that they enter adulthood successfully.

The document goes on to outline the Government's vision in relation to safeguarding as its intention to create:

**“a shift in focus from protecting children from harm, to preventing abuse or neglect in the first place”.** (page 5)

### Who is responsible for coordinating Safeguarding in Surrey?

Strategic responsibility for coordinating Safeguarding in Surrey now lies with the Local Safeguarding Children Board (LSCB). This is known as the Surrey Safeguarding Children Board (SSCB) in Surrey. This is the “key statutory mechanism” for agreeing how relevant organisations will co-operate to safeguard and promote the welfare of children (*Working Together to Safeguard Children*, 3.2)

The core objectives of the SSCB are:

- (a) To coordinate what is done by each person or body represented on the Board for the purposes of safeguarding and promoting the welfare of children in the area of the authority

- (b) To ensure the effectiveness of what is done by each such person or body for those purposes.

- *Children Act 2004, section 14(1)*

The Area Partnerships in themselves have no statutory duty under Section 11, as they are not among the named bodies. Obviously individual members may well belong to one of the named bodies. They may be accountable for ensuring compliance within the team(s) that they manage, and within the work that they commission. It goes without saying that all members have a duty to ensure that the Safeguarding agenda is embedded in the work of the Partnership, and to raise any concerns appropriately. But belonging to an Area Partnership does not confer any additional specific responsibilities on members or Chairs in respect of Safeguarding.

## **How can Surrey's Area Partnerships contribute?**

However, the Area Partnerships undoubtedly have a key role to play in this agenda. Their unique overview of service delivery in their area makes them a valuable source of information, and they are in a position to mobilise resources in response to identified local needs.

The main contribution of the Area Partnerships to the Safeguarding agenda is that through the Area Plans they prioritise and align local services to meet identified safeguarding (including preventative) needs, in line with the strategic direction of the Children & Young People's Plan (CYPP).

Each Partnership also serves as a forum for members to share best practice, and to support each other in embedding the Safeguarding agenda in each agency's own work.

A third function is to develop good relationships and facilitate good communication between partner agencies; an essential underpinning for successful interagency work. In this way, each Area Partnership maintains a unique overview of local service delivery.

Issues such as establishing a clear line of accountability within teams and organisations, safe recruitment, identifying staff training needs around safeguarding, and work with individual children and families are matters for individual services to manage, within structures put in place by the Children & Young People's Commissioning Partnership (CYPCP) and SSCB as appropriate.

## **Integrated systems to support this work**

To support vulnerable children and young people, all agencies need to cooperate in sharing information and building constructive relationships. The CYPCP ensures that integrated systems and relevant strategies are put in place to make effective joint / partnership working possible. The SSCB contributes to the CYPCP goals by

- ◆ Developing policies and procedures for interagency safeguarding and promoting the welfare of children and the action to be taken where there are concerns about a child's safety

- ◆ Monitoring and evaluating the effectiveness of what is done by the Local Authority and board partners individually and collectively, to safeguard the welfare of children
- ◆ Communicating to people and bodies in the area the need to safeguard and promote the welfare of children
- ◆ Participating in local planning and commissioning of children's services to ensure that they take safeguarding into account
- ◆ Undertaking reviews of cases where a child has died or been seriously harmed, and there is concern as to the way in which board partners worked together
- ◆ Collecting and analysing information about the deaths of all children in the area (from April 2008)
- ◆ Provide multi-agency training in safeguarding through foundation training to specialised courses.

The Area Partnerships do not formally coordinate or oversee any of this work, but are expected to support and work within these systems and strategies.

### **How can the Areas Partnerships and SSCB work together effectively?**

SSCB will support the Area Partnerships as follows:

- ◆ SSCB Manager or other representative to attend area partnership meetings.
- ◆ Provide figures for children subject to a child protection plan broken down by category and locality each quarter
- ◆ Provide a quarterly breakdown of Child Protection Conferences by locality
- ◆ Provide summaries / key points from reports and information which require a local discussion / response as appropriate

The Area Partnerships will support the SSCB in the following ways:

- ◆ Support implementation of all policies and procedures agreed by SSCB
- ◆ Identify and exploit local opportunities for enhancing the effectiveness of safeguarding services
- ◆ Highlight local safeguarding issues for consideration at the Local Practice Development group (LPDG)
- ◆ Contribute to resolving identified local issues regarding safeguarding

The Practice Development Groups will support the Area Partnerships by:

- ◆ Arranging attendance of a local PDG facilitator

The Safeguarding Board Manager will:

- ◆ Take issues arising at the Area Partnerships back to the board for consideration

## **Postscript - What is the difference between the Area Partnerships and the Local Practice Development Groups?**

Membership of the SSCB Local Practice Development Groups is opened to all professionals but is particularly targeted at managers, supervisors, named or designated staff that hold a consultative position in relation to safeguarding and Independent Child Protection Conference chairs. The groups meet six times a year. Their aims are:

- To develop a shared philosophy about collaborative working
- To provide a forum to discuss and learn from Quality Assurance and Serious Case Review findings
- Develop plans to promote best practice and enhance learning across all agencies
- To maintain regular and active inter-agency discussion/contact and to promote change
- To develop activity which promotes inter agency collaboration
- To value and share each other's knowledge and expertise
- To engage in a dialogue with the SSCB on the impact of policy on practice

*Source: SSCB August 2006 Newsletter*

The Area Partnerships by way of contrast focus more on the practical implementation of the CYP Plan priorities in their area. Although in practice there is much overlap between the two groups, their respective core functions are quite different. It is essential that the two groups communicate regularly and support each other in order to add value to each other's work.

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\*A children's services authority, a district council, Strategic Health Authority, Special Health Authority, Primary Care Trust, an NHS trust, NHS foundation trust; police authority, British Transport Police Authority, local probation board, youth offending team, prison or secure training centre, any person providing services under section 114 of the Learning and Skills Act [2000 \(c. 21\)](#).