

January 2012

Dear All

### Future arrangements for Devon Safeguarding Children Board

As I am sure you are aware the DSCB has been considering what the best structural arrangements will be for the future to deliver the range of responsibilities that are highlighted in the national reports from Professor Munro and which will deliver the sort of impact across the safeguarding system that will guarantee the quality improvements in practice that need to flow from the evidence from Serious Case Reviews and Multi Agency Case Audits across Devon.

There has been and will continue to be significant changes in organisational structures and resources across all partners represented at the DSCB. This along with the rewriting of the national guidance of Working Together provides an opportunity to re-cast the membership and accountabilities of the DSCB and the nature of the sub groups that work to the Board.

This note is designed to inform everyone currently involved in sub group activity, on behalf of the Board, what stage we have reached in our thinking about the best way to deliver our accountabilities in the future.

Safeguarding Children Boards have 2 main accountabilities, to co-ordinate local work and policies to safeguard children, and to ensure the effectiveness of the work, advising and challenging on ways to improve. It is for individual organisations and joint arrangements such as the Children's Trust to deliver safe services that have statutory responsibilities and which have been commissioned in response to locally assessed needs identified through the Joint Strategic Needs Assessment.

Since June 2011 the DSCB has been discussing the major organisational changes underway locally, as a result of new Government policy initiatives. The Board has recognised that the current range of working groups and the effectiveness of structures, such as the Executive needed to be reviewed and consequently, established a task and finish group from DSCB members to bring forward proposals about a sustainable working model for the future.

The task group was asked to report by the December 2011 DSCB meeting and to consider the recommendations from Munro and the Government's response, the rewriting of the national guidance Working Together and in particular Chapter 3 which currently describes the roles of Safeguarding Children Boards. They were also asked to consider what opportunities existed in the future to create more efficient and effective structures by collaboration with the other LSCBs across the far south west peninsular and the Safeguarding Adults Board for Devon.

An initial set of proposals were debated at the DSCB on 9th December 2011 but it was recognised that these needed further development and that they must comply with the new Chapter 3 guidance which is due out for consultation this month. However the general direction of the proposals was supported with a final report being delivered to the DSCB in March 2012 and subsequent implementation of changes beginning from April.

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It was agreed at the DSCB that retaining a focus on the Board's main accountabilities was vital, especially during such dynamic changing times, and that the Board should minimise the number of standing sub groups and at the same time commission time limited task and finish groups to respond speedily to specific work requirements as needed. It was further agreed that the standing sub groups should be directly accountable to the DSCB and that any task and finish groups should similarly be directly accountable and report to the DSCB. The Board are proposing ending the current DSCB Executive meetings as a result.

The DSCB want to ensure a more direct influence in ensuring that frontline practice and inter-organisational integrated working to safeguard children is effective, along with improved engagement of children in improving outcomes and wish deliver this through the development of 3 locality DSCB Forums which will be expected to drive this vital part of the agenda.

The importance of strengthening the role and functions of the DSCB Safeguarding Office was also agreed, with some current sub group responsibilities being transferred to the Safeguarding Office to fulfil. The DSCB recognises the importance of the work of specialist sub groups that currently work under the umbrella of the Board and want to ensure the safe transfer of this vital activity to new reporting arrangements.

The following are the sub groups that will remain and be strengthened to deliver key DSCB accountabilities.

Workforce Development and Training - To potentially develop jointly with Adult Safeguarding in Devon and Torbay LSCB training and development.

Quality Assurance Audit and Complaints - to continue to be the main vehicle for the DSCB to use to monitor and challenge the quality of frontline practice and to develop a working arrangement with the 3 new Locality DSCB Forums. The QAAC will also develop peer review and systems approaches to understanding how safe working practices are.

Serious Case Reviews - This is a statutory requirement and includes the commissioning of the peninsula wide Child Death Overview Panel which is also a statutory requirement. The sub group will in future use a range of system methodologies as well as the current SCR process to investigate and publish reports on children who die or are seriously injured as a result of abuse.

3 new Locality DSCB Forums will be established from April 2012 with clear terms of reference and accountabilities.

It has been agreed that the work of the Policies and Procedures sub group should in future be commissioned as required as a peninsula wide task and finish group to deliver specific protocols and that the South West Child Protection Procedures provide the necessary inter-agency policy and procedural guidance that should be used by all.

The functions of the current Publications, Communications and Communities sub group will become the responsibility of the DSCB Safeguarding Office and will include co-ordinating and managing the DSCB Annual Report and Business Plan alongside PR media and awareness raising activities. These will still need specialist input as required from experts who are embedded within partner organisations.

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Current specialist sub groups that cover Domestic Violence, Private Fostering, Substance Misuse, E-Safety, and Health will be the responsibility of Lead Agencies within the DSCB to ensure thematic issues are brought to the DSCB as necessary and that the Board has an annual report of activity and performance that demonstrates their contributions to making children in Devon safer.

Domestic Violence and Private Fostering	- DCC Rory McCallum
Substance Misuse and Health	- NHS/DCC Virginia Pearson
E Safety	- DCC Sue Clarke (including links with peninsula wide child exploitation work and South West Grid for Learning)

It may well be appropriate in the finalised structures, to be agreed at the March 2012 DSCB, for some of these specialist themes to feature as part of the development of the 3 Locality Forums. It is certainly likely that the Locality Forums will take responsibility for some aspects of case audit and practice improvements.

The commissioning of Task and Finish Groups will be the responsibility of the DSCB and the Board has agreed that necessary resourcing will be made available as required to ensure speedy progress is made and that a lead accountable DSCB member will take responsibility to complete the required task. It may also be that the 4 peninsula LSCBs commission task and finish work, in which case one of the Boards will be responsible for leading on behalf of the 4.

The DSCB Safeguarding Office will continue in its role of co-ordinating and supporting all DSCB commissioned sub group and task and finish group activities including the 3 Locality Forums.

The last 3 years has seen enormous changes and improvements in safeguarding children in Devon and much of this is down to the sheer hard work and commitment of so many people and organisations involved with the DSCB and its various working groups. Change is now inevitable as a result of organisational and financial challenges and changes and it is right that the DSCB continues to strive for ever greater influence and impact in what it does. The changes outlined above will not be finalised until the March DSCB meeting so any comments would be gratefully received, especially with proposals and ideas how this new structure can ensure dynamism and change in safeguarding arrangements (via Julie Mitchell at [julie.mitchell@devon.gov.uk](mailto:julie.mitchell@devon.gov.uk))

I would like to thank everyone of you personally for all your commitment, time and expertise and hope that you can continue to contribute to the work plan of the DSCB as it goes forward.

Alan Wooderson  
Independent Chair of the Devon Safeguarding Children Board