

Case Study for LSCB

Developing an Approach to Safeguarding Children at South Lakeland District Council

Background

The Children Act 1989 initially placed a duty on Local Authorities to safeguard and promote the welfare of all children in their area. The Children Act 2004 then built on that to form part of a wider government strategy for improving children's lives. The vision was to facilitate the best outcome possible for every child. The guidance document 'Working together to Safeguard Children (updated 2015)' adds detail to the statutory duties set out in the 2004 Act.

The core principle of both the Children's Act 2004 and the Working Together to Safeguard Children guidance is the protection of children and promotion of their wellbeing through an integrated approach by all statutory agencies. The Police, Health Services and all Councils are required to consider safeguarding when planning and delivering or commissioning their services.

South Lakeland District Council discharges a number of functions that impact upon the lives of children and families, and some employees, elected members, contractors and volunteers will work in close proximity to children as part of their daily duties. Whilst the Council is not a direct provider of children's services it does have a significant role to play in safeguarding children and the promotion of their welfare. Statutory and discretionary services discharged by the Council include Licensing; Planning; Environmental Health; Strategic Housing; parks; homelessness; enforcement; leisure management, tourism and customer services. Where appropriate, and within legal guidelines, the Council must share information with other agencies to protect children from harm.

Providing early help is the most effective way to safeguard and improve the lives of children. Early help means providing support at a local level, as soon as a problem emerges in a child's life. The LSCB is setting district based Early Help Panels to address specific cases. SLDC expects representatives to be invited when necessary eg. Homelessness

Improvement through Section 11 of Children's Act 2004

S11 of the Children's Act 2004 requires responsible agencies to undertake a periodic audit of its activities. This audit is co-ordinated by the LSCB on an annual basis. In recent years SLDC have completed the audit assessing the Council against a set of criteria which provide effective delivery of safeguarding services. The completed audit in 2015/16 identified two key areas in need of improvement, namely the need for an update of our procedures/policy and also for a more comprehensive programme of training throughout the authority. Work commenced on addressing them in early 2016. This work has involved:-

Revised Policy and Procedures

The previous procedures used by SLDC were approved in 2012. These needed updating and improving. We engaged a qualified safeguarding trainer who was able

to help develop the new policy/procedures so that they could be integrated into the training. This will help staff to know what to look out for, where to find information when needed and who to contact if they have concerns. The revised Procedures are currently in their final draft and being tested with managers. The Policy has been approved and owned by SMT and Cabinet.

Programme of training

The safeguarding trainer has produced and delivered a programme of training tailored to the different needs of staff, managers and members. This training has drawn from the on-line training provided by the LSCB but has included a more interactive element. The programme has been rolled out since September 2016.

Partners such as the Council's leisure provider, CCL and the principal rented housing provider, South Lakes Housing, were invited to provide evidence of their policy and training programmes or to take advantage of the training (at appropriate cost). CCL provided robust documentation on their training. South Lakes Housing adapted the Council's new Policy to their needs and are taking part in SLDC training. Other delivery partners are now required to demonstrate they comply with the standards expected on safeguarding through requirements incorporated in relevant contracts through tendering processes

The training is now compulsory for all staff and members. Once the programme is completed future training will be addressed through refresh sessions where appropriate and as part of the induction process for new staff. The opportunities for training will include consideration of the training modules on the LSCB website.

Conclusion

As a result of the improvement activities carried out the Council have felt confident in completing the most recent s11 Audit to show that all criteria are fully met.