

“The purpose of this report is to support LSCBs in reflecting on their practice, planning for improvement and learning from the experience of other boards. The report builds on and extends previous research into the functioning of LSCBs by presenting how some boards are implementing improvements and highlighting how they are beginning to develop methods to measure their impact.” (Paragraph 2)

This digest seeks to set out some of the key messages in the Ofsted report. The reflective questions can be found in Annex A (attached as 19A).

Evidence used in the report (para 6)

The good practice set out in this report is based on evidence from a variety of sources:

- Ofsted inspections of safeguarding and looked after children (SLAC) services
- responses to requests to all LSCBs to submit examples of good practice in the five areas listed above
- visits and in depth telephone interviews with those LSCBs which offered examples of good practice
- a review of information about LSCBs and their practice which is in the public domain.

The core objectives of LSCBs (para 15) are to:

- co-ordinate, monitor and support what is done by each person or body represented on the LSCB for the purposes of safeguarding and promoting the welfare of children in the area of the authority
- ensure the effectiveness of what is done by each such person or body for that purpose

Safeguarding and promoting the welfare of children are defined as:

- protecting children from maltreatment
- preventing impairment of children’s health or development
- ensuring that children are growing up in circumstances consistent with the provision of safe and effective care
- enabling children to have optimum life chances and enter adulthood successfully.

LSCB functions, as set out in Working together to safeguard children, include (para 17):

- developing policies and procedures for safeguarding and promoting welfare
- communicating and raising awareness
- monitoring and evaluation
- participating in planning and commissioning services
- collecting and analysing information in relation to child deaths
- conducting serious case reviews

Good practice is examined under five headings (para 23):

- governance arrangements
- quality assurance
- learning from serious case reviews
- multi-agency training and learning
- measuring impact

Governance arrangements: Implications for practice (page 11)

LSCBs demonstrate good practice by:

- keeping their governance arrangements under review using either national assessment tools or those developed locally
- recruiting Chairs with the relevant skills, who think and act strategically, and who are linked into local networks
- having Chairs who are willing to challenge and encourage others to do so
- recruiting board members who are sufficiently senior to hold others to account and effect change
- ensuring that board members, including lay members, are properly inducted and fully supported in their roles
- adopting a variety of measures to encourage consistent attendance at LSCB meetings
- experimenting with a variety of means for engaging with young people and frontline staff and acting on the results of this engagement
- establishing streamlined structures and ensuring that their groups and committees work effectively as a ‘whole-system’
- concentrating on a limited number of priorities determined by national research and local circumstances
- widely publicising their business plans and regularly reviewing and updating them
- establishing effective working relationships with the local Children’s Trust and defining their respective roles.

Quality assurance: Implications for practice (page 22)

LSCBs demonstrate good practice by:

- having comprehensive and integrated systems in place, which allow them to scrutinise performance in key areas, at different levels and in geographical localities
- involving frontline workers in audit processes
- using independent audits and inspection findings to drive improvement
- employing a variety of techniques and taking a very thorough approach to auditing
- adopting a thematic and planned approach to auditing
- using the outcomes of audits to learn and improve practice
- assessing the impact of changes resulting from audit findings on children and young people and their families rather than confining their attention to changes in processes
- having a high level of internal challenge but also challenging other agencies and holding them to account
- scrutinising not only their own activities but also those of other bodies, including young offenders’ institutions.

Learning from serious case reviews: implications for practice (page 32)

LSCBs demonstrate good practice by:

- being proactive in ensuring that lessons are learned from SCRs and in disseminating information from SCR findings
- ensuring that recommendations are implemented, holding agencies to account for progressing their individual action plans
- using SCR findings to drive improvement and to influence future plans
- learning from the process of carrying out SCRs
- understanding how implementing the findings of SCRs makes a difference to children, young people and their families
- learning from ‘near misses’ and serious incidents that do not meet the criteria for SCRs.

Multi-agency training: Implications for practice (page 38)

LSCBs demonstrate good practice by:

- striving to ensure the provision of a comprehensive programme of high-quality training linked to their priorities and business plans
- ensuring that training is quality assured and caters for the needs of a wide range of people, including volunteers
- using national research as well as local knowledge to shape training provision
- promoting the availability of training and adopting measure to increase its accessibility
- employing a range of delivery methods
- seeking to assess the impact of training not only at the time of delivery but at recurring intervals.

Area generally found to be generally weaker across include (para 127)

- governance arrangements, especially in relation to continuity of board membership, lay member involvement and the relationships between LSCBs and senior managers
- the quality assurance role of LSCBs, particularly in respect of multi-agency auditing, internal and external challenge
- the engagement of children, young people and their families in the work of LSCBs and in determining their priorities
- the involvement across the structure of relevant partner organisations.

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Reflective questions for consideration by Local Safeguarding Children Boards

The questions in Annex A are posed at relevant points in the report. Annex A is reproduced here in full.

Governance

1. How does your Chair bring independence and challenge to board discussions?
2. How does your Chair facilitate participation from all board members, including lay members?
3. How do agencies currently respond to challenge and how could this be improved?

Partnership working

4. How are partners engaged throughout your board structure?
5. How is partners' attendance at meetings monitored and facilitated?
6. What improvements could be made to partners' engagement in delivering frontline practice and understanding local issues?
7. How does the board challenge partners about their contribution to improvements in frontline practice?

Engagement with young people

8. How is your board engaging with children and young people and ensuring that the issues it considers are important to young people?
9. Would any of the participation ideas above work in your area?
10. Do you have any further ideas about how you could involve children and young people?

Business planning and relationship between LSCBs and Children's Trusts

11. Has your board focused on a few, really important priorities which could make a significant difference through joint agency working?
12. How is local knowledge utilised to ensure that the priorities are relevant to your area?
13. Are all agencies and their staff aware of the priorities and why they are important for improving outcomes for children and families?
14. How do staff know how what they do is having an impact on the priority areas?
15. How do you measure the impact of your business plan on outcomes for children and families?

Quality Assurance

16. How are you using local knowledge, results from serious case reviews (both local and national) and national research to inform your audit programme?
17. How are you acting on the results of audits to improve and challenge frontline practice?

18. How are you measuring the impact of this work on ensuring that improvements are made to frontline practice?
19. Do you regularly audit and re-audit to ensure continuous improvement?
20. How does your audit activity link to strategic and future planning?

Learning from serious case reviews

21. How do you ensure that recommendations from SCRs are disseminated effectively?
22. How do the results of SCRs feed into your audit programme?
23. How do you ensure that any gaps identified in frontline practice as a result of SCRs are improved?
24. Can you give specific examples of how you have learnt and changed practice following an SCR?

Multi-agency training and learning

25. How does your training link to issues and gaps identified through monitoring, auditing and quality assurance activity?
26. Are you clear about the benefits to be gained from multi-agency rather than single agency training and how do you make sure you realise those benefits?
27. How is the impact of training measured?
28. How does the training align with audit activity and gaps identified through this?
29. How do you ensure that practice improves as a result of training activity?

Measuring impact

30. How is your board measuring the impact of its activity on outcomes for children and young people?
31. How do you use national research to lead to improvements in direct work with children and their families?
32. How can you strengthen links within your board between identified gaps, lessons from SCRs, auditing activity, training, future planning and improvements in frontline practice?

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