

1. Background

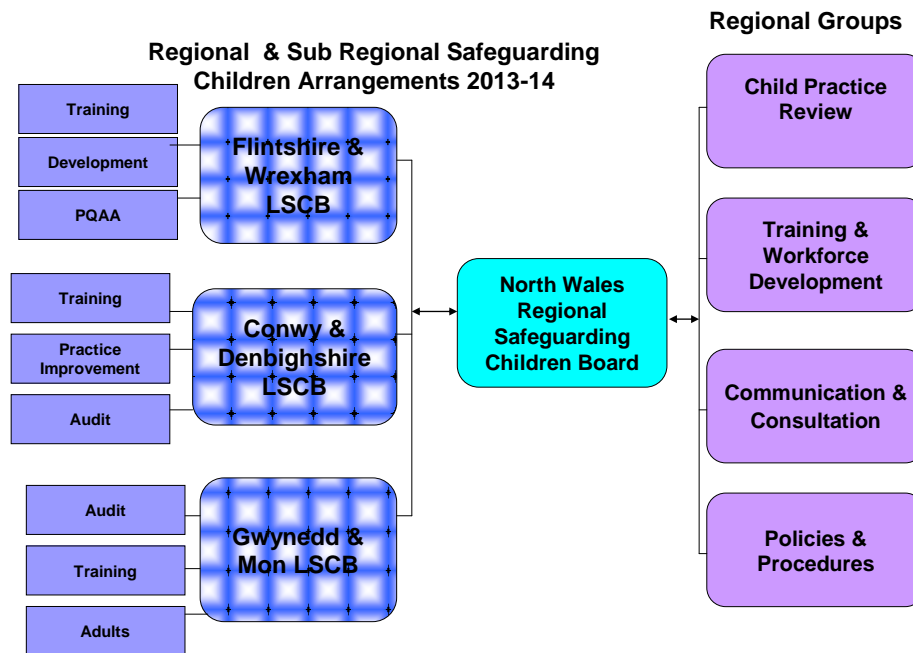
- 1.1 Local Safeguarding Children Boards are statutory partnerships. The objective of Local Safeguarding Children Boards, to co-ordinate and ensure the effectiveness of partners' safeguarding activities, is established in the Children Act 2004. Regulations further expand on the functions of an LSCB, and specify membership of the board.
- 1.2 Three sub-regional Safeguarding Children Boards have been in place for some time across North Wales: Gwynedd & Mon LSCB, Conwy & Denbighshire LSCB, and Flintshire & Wrexham LSCB. Following announcements from Welsh Government in the autumn of 2011, the three sub-regional LSCBs have taken steps to promote greater integration and collaboration, and to move towards a regional structure, ahead of the forthcoming Social Services & Wellbeing Act.
- 1.3 The Social Services & Wellbeing Bill also proposes putting safeguarding adults on to a similar statutory footing as that for children, including the requirement for Adult Safeguarding Boards.

2. North Wales Pilot Regional and Sub Regional Structures

- 2.1. Recommendations to pilot a two tier regional structure were developed by the Chairs, Vice Chairs and Business Managers of the North Wales LSCBs, and were agreed by the three LSCBs during 2012. The two tier structure took into account the need to:
 - reflect local needs, culture and language,
 - maintain governance arrangements with elected members within Local Authorities,
 - support the Statutory Directors of Social Services in their duties and responsibilities

Within the two tier structure, accountability for safeguarding children remained with the local boards, who have continued to report via the Directors of Social Services to the Elected Members in each local authority area. The Regional Board was established in January 2013 to provide strategic direction, including directing four regional groups to carry out some of the functions of the boards. This two-tier structure is shown in Diagram 1, below.

Diagram 1. Current North Wales Safeguarding Children Boards Two tier structure (January 2013 – April 2014)



2.2. The four regional sub groups have developed well and key successes have included:

- added value in the scrutiny of policies and procedures, and a programme to standardise procedures in five areas of practice during 2014/15;
- additional training for professionals to undertake child practice reviews, creating a resource of competent staff with the confidence to review cases involving significant harm and facilitate learning events
- a successful and robust management of Child Practice Review arrangements, with two extended child practice reviews and four multi-agency professional forums underway, staffed by professionals drawn from across the region
- a detailed training needs analysis, which identified five subject areas for standardised training to be developed and delivered across the region during 2014/15
- a very successful regional conference on Domestic Abuse, attended by 200 professionals from a wide range of agencies from across the region, at which 99% of respondents said they would share what they had learnt with colleagues

2.3. Whilst the two-tier structure has been successful in several respects, it has also created tensions:

- There has been increased pressure on the capacity of senior representatives, as membership of regional bodies is replicated at regional and local levels
- The regional board has been unable to move ahead as quickly as it would like on issues such as funding, business support and setting regional priorities,
- sub-regional LSCBs can respond differently to communications from the regional board

- There are concerns that the regional board and its agenda cannot adequately meet local needs in terms of cultural differences and local issues
 - Staff at operational manager / team manager level feel distanced from the Safeguarding Board, and lacking in direction
 - Feeling distanced from decisions and direction, local sub groups have continued to set their own agendas
- 2.4. There has been progress in the development of regional and sub regional arrangements for safeguarding adults, where structures remain at local authority level in four out of six local authority areas. The exception is Gwynedd & Anglesey, who have a Joint Adult Safeguarding Board.

3. Evaluation of the two –tier model

- 3.1. The North Wales two-tier pilot model was one of two regional structures chosen to be evaluated by the University of Sheffield on behalf of the Association for Directors of Social Services (ADSS) Wales Safeguarding Policy Group and Welsh Local Government Association (WLGA). The evaluation will inform the writing of guidance following the enactment of the Social Services & Wellbeing (Wales) Bill.
- 3.2. The ADSSW & WLGA evaluation study also included a follow-up survey of the members of all the Welsh boards, which found that there was commitment and enthusiasm to ensure regional Safeguarding Children Boards (SCBs) are effective and safeguard and promote the welfare of children. Moreover, members of the various regional SCBs across Wales recognised that there can be benefits from merging LSCBs into regional SCBs. These benefits include:
- reduced duplication
 - greater practice consistency
 - more effective collaboration
 - standardised safeguarding systems.
- 3.3 Survey participants also reported a number of challenges facing SCBs, most of which reflect the tensions found in North Wales. The ADSS and WLGA's evaluation report was completed in early April, and has since formally fed back to Welsh Government, the Safeguarding Advisory Panel and CSSIW. The need to reflect local culture, language and concerns is one of the messages taken back to WG.
- 3.4 Jan Horwath, the researcher from the University of Sheffield, reported the findings of the evaluation study to the regional SCB at its development meeting of 8th April 2014. Copies of the research report are available on request.
- 3.5 The Welsh Independent Safeguarding Panel has also considered the Welsh Government's proposals for Safeguarding Children Boards, and has made recommendations to Welsh Government which include:

- that the role, capacity, training and development of safeguarding business units is established in regulations
- that a funding framework for the Safeguarding Boards should be specified in regulation
- that the local Authority should be the Lead Partner for Safeguarding Adults Boards and Safeguarding Children Boards.

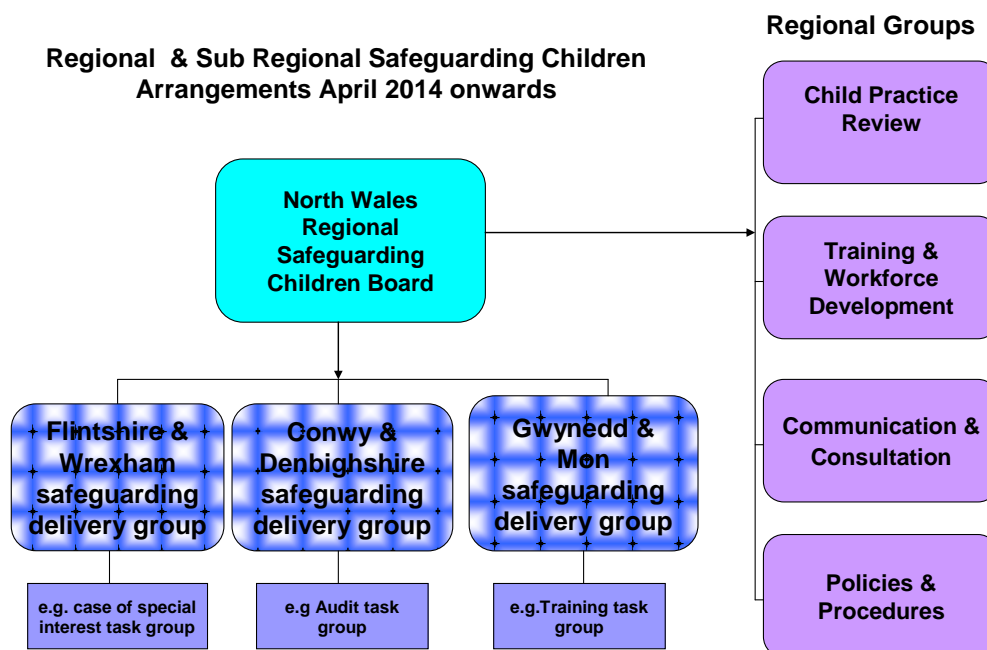
The full report is available at

<http://wales.gov.uk/topics/health/publications/socialcare/reports/advisory/?lang=en>

4. Proposed Revised Regional & Sub Regional Structures

- 4.1. The North Wales regional SCB used the findings of the ADSSW / WLGA evaluation study and the Independent Safeguarding Panel's report to inform discussion and decision making at its development day on 4th April 2014.
- 4.2. The regional SCB recognised that there was a need to reduce the duplication of roles, responsibilities and representation at regional and sub-regional levels, whilst maintaining mechanisms to deliver regional direction and engage professionals at a local level. Draft revised structures were developed at the development session, and were then formally considered and agreed at the regional SCB meeting on 8th April 2014. The proposed revised structure places responsibility and accountability with the regional board, and replaces the sub regional LSCBs with local safeguarding delivery groups. Representation will be at the level directed in statute on the Regional SCB, and at Head of Service/ operational manager level on the local delivery group. The proposed amended local structure is shown in Diagram 2, below.
- 4.3. The revised structure addresses the concerns initially identified:
 - local needs, culture and language are supported via the local safeguarding delivery groups
 - Statutory Directors of Social Services can continue to report to Elected Members in local Authority Areas
 - Local and Regional structures will be supported by representatives at different levels, reducing the pressures on very senior representatives (see Appendix 1)
 - The regional Board will be able to make decisions and promote swifter progress
- 4.4. The lessons learnt from the Safeguarding Children Board pilot can now be applied to the development of regional and sub regional structures for safeguarding adults.

Diagram 2: Proposed Sub Regional Structure April 2014 onwards



5. Funding and Business Support

- 5.1 One of the North Wales LSCBs fully agreed, and two LSCBs agreed in principle, to a funding report produced by multi agency finance task group in the summer of 2012. The task group proposed that:
- All statutory agencies' contributions should be paid into a regional fund
 - Contributions into the regional fund should be proportionate to the agencies gross revenue expenditure
 - There should be a regional business support structure, which included designated support to the sub regional areas, costing approximately £126k.
 - The business support structure should be flexible, so that business support for adult safeguarding could be developed, as necessary
 - £30k should be available to support training and other expenses.
- 5.2. However, the lack of a clear mandate to continue with this approach has meant that these arrangements are not yet in place. With no regional mandate, each of the LSCBs has independently agreed a 2014/15 budget and contributions, and staff turnover has necessitated the appointment of interim business support staff, with contracts running to April 2015.
- 5.3. Members of the regional SCB are mindful of the adult Safeguarding Board developments, and have considered options for business support that could also support the growing adult's agenda. These options are shown at Appendix 1. Already, in Gwynedd & Anglesey, where a joint Adults Board

exists, the interim business manager will support both the adult's and the children's boards.

- 5.3. Development of a regional SCB website has been pursued by the regional Communications and Consultation group. Currently four websites exist, duplicating information on each site, and duplicating the use of resources to maintain them. The group has been unsuccessful in finding a host authority for the regional site.
- 5.3. At its meeting of 8th April 2014, following legal advice, the Regional Board agreed the original finance task group proposals, and decided to move ahead with establishing a regional fund and business support structure by the target date of April 2015.
- 5.4. In order to move ahead with funding and business support proposals, a host authority needs to be identified. It is proposed that the host authority will take effect from April 2015. The host authority will:
- Collect and gold contributions from statutory agencies, and provide financial support to the regional SCB.
 - Employ regional staff who will work flexibly across North Wales
 - Host the regional SCB website,
- 5.5 However, there is a need to move ahead before April 2015. It is therefore proposed that a lead authority be identified as soon as possible. The Lead Authority will begin to develop the details around issues such as
- Business support staff job evaluation,
 - implementation plans,
 - options for a flexible business support structure that can support the growing adults agenda,
 - proposals for legal, committee administration and other support services

6. Decisions required

The Regional Leadership Board is asked:

1. To agree the proposed structure for the regional SCB, to be known as the North Wales Safeguarding Children Board; this to take effect as soon as possible
2. That each Statutory Agency takes this report through its governance and political processes.
3. To identify a Lead Authority for the interim period to April 2015
4. To agree a Host Authority from April 2015