



Report of the Chair of the Regional Safeguarding Children Board

Integration and Collaboration of the North Wales Local Safeguarding Children Boards

1. Purpose of Report

1.1 This report provides Elected Members with the background to the move towards greater integration and collaboration between the North Wales Safeguarding Children Boards, and the progress that has been made to date.

2. Background

2.1 On 18th of October 2011, the Welsh Government released a written statement from Gwenda Thomas, Deputy Minister for Children and Social Services. Included in this statement was reference to reducing the number of Local Safeguarding Children Boards (LSCBs), and matching them to the proposed Public Service Delivery footprint of six. The statement also said:

‘In advance of the legislation, my expectation is that LSCBs will begin planning for the change and move onto a collaborative model as soon as possible.’

2.2 The Deputy Minister’s written statement has since been integrated into the draft Social Services (Wales) Bill Consultation Document, issued on the 12th March 2012 which states:

“We intend to establish new Safeguarding Children Boards and Adult Protection Boards. These will merge in time, when it is safe to do so, to form Safeguarding and Protection Boards. The new structure will be based on the geographic areas of North Wales; Mid and West Wales; Gwent; Cardiff and Vale; Cwm Taf; and Swansea Bay.”

2.3 LSCBs in North Wales had already taken steps towards greater collaboration ahead of the Welsh Government declarations. Examples of this include:

- The North Wales Protocols Group
- Quarterly North Wales Business Managers meetings
- The recently disbanded North Wales Safeguarding Children Forum, formerly the North Wales Child Protection Forum.

2.4 In response to the communications from the Deputy Minister, the Chairs, Vice Chairs and Business Managers of the North Wales LSCBs met on two occasions to explore options for further collaboration and integration, and develop recommendations to be considered by the LSCBs.

3. The North Wales model : a regional approach that maintains the local perspective

- 3.1 Three options were originally considered by the Chairs group:
- Option 1 - Maintain the status quo i.e. three North Wales LSCBs
 - Option 2 - A single North Wales LSCB
 - Option 3 - A two - tier LSCB

Appendix 1 lists the strengths and weaknesses of each model.

3.2 The strengths and weakness of each model were considered the Chairs group, and a decision was made to opt for a two-tier structure, which includes Regional and Local Safeguarding Children Boards. It was agreed that this option:

- maintained the ability to be responsive to local issues and cultural differences;
- minimised transition problems;
- reduced duplication;
- allowed evolution;
- offered the potential for reducing the demand on resources, both human and financial;
- offered the benefits of having the right people at both tiers, with a wider range of experience and specialisms;
- could be structured in various ways to allow a balance between local and regional agendas;
- provided added value as the Regional Board could create a higher profile and increase the LSCB's level of influence regionally and nationally;
- met the Welsh Government's proposals set out in the draft Social Services Bill (Wales) 2012;
- strengthened the existing North Wales agenda for collaboration.

3.3 The Chair's group produced a report to be considered by each of the three North Wales LSCBs. Each of the three North Wales LSCBs accepted the report and recommendations for the structure of Safeguarding Children Boards at their Board meetings during the summer of 2012. A diagram of the agreed structure can be found at Appendix 2.

3.4 The Association for Directors of Social Services (ADSS) Wales Safeguarding Policy Group and Welsh Local Government Association (WLGA) agreed that two areas should pilot regional LSCB models to inform the writing of guidance following the enactment of the Social Services Bill in 2013. The North Wales regional/local model was chosen as one of the pilot areas. Gwent, who are developing a fully regionalised model across five Local Authority areas, was chosen as the second pilot area. The models will be evaluated by a researcher from Sheffield University, paid for by a grant from the Welsh Government.

- 3.5 In the North Wales model, the Regional Safeguarding Children Board (RSCB) will:
- Formulate the regional strategic direction of the RSCB;
 - Determine and agree funding arrangements;
 - Establish relationships with other regional partnerships including the newly formed Adult Safeguarding Board;
 - Develop, agree and monitor the implementation of a regional business plan;
 - Decide on, and monitor the progress of Child Practice Reviews and their action plans;
 - Develop and ratify policies & procedures;
 - Determine a regional communications and consultation strategy, and a regional training and workforce delivery strategy and monitor its implementation
 - Receive communications from the LSCBs and the regional subgroups as relevant.

- 3.6 In this two-tier model, the Local Safeguarding Children Board (LSCB) will:
- Undertake Child practice Reviews as determined by the regional Child Practice Review Group
 - Monitor, challenge and improve local operational practice;
 - Hold local agencies and partnerships to account, via annual reports & performance information;
 - Maintain relationships with local partnerships;
 - Undertake themed case audits via local task and finish groups;
 - Identify issues to be dealt with or communicated to either the regional subgroups or the RSCB;
 - Identify good practice to be shared across North Wales
 - Maintain links and communication with the local safeguarding workforce;
 - Provide consultation responses to regional draft policies and protocols;
 - Develop and implement a local work plan.

4. Progress towards implementing the North Wales model for Safeguarding Children Boards

4.1 The RSCB

4.1.1 Once the three North Wales LSCBs had approved the model for integration and collaboration, a wider group met to agree the next steps. This group included representatives from the six Local Authorities, Police, Health, and Probation. The group met twice to consider governance; membership of the Regional and Local boards; the terms of reference for the Regional Board for the duration of the pilot; membership; terms of reference for the regional sub-groups; and Chairing arrangements.

4.1.2 The inaugural meeting of the North Wales Regional Safeguarding Children Board (RSCB) took place on 31st January 2013. Jenny Williams, Director of Social Services, Conwy, was confirmed as Chair of the Board, with Judith Williams, Local Delivery Unit Manager, Wales Probation, as Vice Chair. Membership of the Board was confirmed, and it was agreed that this should include representation from Education, Housing, the Voluntary Sector and Welsh Ambulance Services. The RSCB met again in March and May.

4.1.3 After discussion around governance and statutory responsibilities, it was agreed that accountability for safeguarding children remained with the local boards, who will report via the Directors of Social Services to the Elected Members in each local authority area. There was also discussion around the relationship between the Safeguarding Boards and the Local Service Boards, and it is recognised that this relationship will require further clarification in due course.

4.1.4 A group with representatives from each of the agencies that contribute to the North Wales LSCBs is meeting to discuss funding, business support and other expenditure options for the new structure in July.

4.1.5 A statement of purpose for the for the North Wales pilot Regional Safeguarding Children Board has been agreed and can be found as Appendix 3 to this report. The term 'pilot' has since been dropped from the title, to reflect the Welsh Government's desire for progress towards regionalisation ahead of the legislation.

4.2 Regional Subgroups

4.2.1 the RSCB agreed that regional subgroups should replace the local subgroups on four key areas of LSCB work. Subgroups have reported back on progress and risks to the RSCB. The risks that may arise as a result of this approach have been identified as:

- Loss of language sensitivity / need for simultaneous translation, which would be an additional cost to some LSCBs.
- Loss of engagement as subgroups become more distant
- Loss of committed individuals who have contributed to the LSCB for some time

However, the RSCB has identified the benefits of this as:

- Minimised duplication of time and effort
- Reduced call on staff time
- A more strategic approach
- Sharing of good practice across the region

Information on the progress made towards establishing the regional subgroups is given below.

4.2.2 Regional Child Practice Review (CPR) Subgroup

The regional group has clarified its aims and objectives, and has agreed that on-going investigations to be completed by Local CPR groups with any new cases to be referred to the Regional CPR Group. The subgroup has clarified that any additional costs will be met from the respective local Boards until regional funding arrangements are agreed.

- Chair: David Beard, Assistant Director, Children Services Barnado's Cymru
- Vice Chair: Rachel Shaw, Designated Nurse, Safeguarding Children, Public Health Wales

4.2.3 Regional Communications & Consultation Subgroup

The group has reviewed and amended the terms of reference for the group, including the membership, and have asked for a budget for the subgroup to be identified. The subgroup has begun to develop a regional communications and consultation strategy, work plan and events calendar.

- Chair: Lisa Surridge, Detective Inspector, North Wales Police
- Vice Chair: Cheryl Ozbilen, Independent Reviewing Officer, Flintshire Safeguarding Unit

4.2.4 Regional Policies & Procedures Subgroup

A great deal of discussion was had over whether this subgroup should include 'practice' within its remit. The terms of reference were revisited and it was agreed that this Sub Group should focus on Policies and Procedures. Deliberations within the LSCBs and the RSCB gradually clarified that the LSCBs would most likely maintain local practice improvement subgroups. A draft work plan has been developed, which is due to be finalised in July.

- Chair: Francine Salem, Head of Safeguarding, Wrexham County Borough Council
- Vice Chair: Sue Trehearn, Service Manager, Safeguarding and Practice Quality, Denbighshire County Council.

4.2.5 Regional Training & Workforce Development Subgroup

The aims and objectives of the group were clarified at an initial meeting, following which the Chairs of the existing LSCB Training Subgroups met to share information on their workplans, budgets and training priorities. There is a need for a regionally agreed, dedicated budget for training and workforce development. The Regional subgroup is

working towards a regional Training & Workforce Development Strategy and delivery plan for 2014-15. Therefore the local Training Subgroups will remain operational until the end of the 2013-14 financial year.

- Chair: Janet Morgan, Head of Governance, Efficiency and Transformation, Conwy CBC.
- Vice Chair: Joan Williams, Senior Nurse, Safeguarding, Ynys Môn.

4.3 The LSCBs

4.3.1 In this North Wales model, Local Executive Boards will continue to sit, and will discharge the functions outlined in paragraph 3.6, above. The membership of the local Boards may change, but current suggestions indicate that the seniority of representatives would still meet the requirements of the Local Safeguarding Children Boards (Wales) Regulations 2006.

4.3.2 The North Wales model maintains accountability with the LSCBs. LSCBs may agree to grant the RSCB authority to act on their behalf within current legislation, but there are currently no plans to do so. LSCB Chairs will retain responsibility for agreeing for Child Practice Reviews to be undertaken, and will retain responsibility for multi-agency practice within their area. As noted in paragraph 4.1.3, Directors of Social Services will retain responsibility for reporting to the Elected Members in their area. LSCBs will continue providing their annual reports to their local Elected Members; current proposals are for an additional covering report to be provided by the RSCB.

4.3.3 After some discussion and feedback from local subgroups and Boards, it has been agreed that local arrangements for Communications & Consultation, Policies & Procedures, and Child practice Reviews should continue with any current tasks until the late autumn, or until the corresponding regional group is able to take over. As noted in paragraph 4.2.5, Local Training Subgroups will continue until the end of the financial year, to give the Regional Training & Workforce Development Subgroup time to develop a coherent plan for 2014-15.

4.3.4 Once the regional subgroups are up and running, local infrastructure may differ across the region, but is likely to consist of the Executive Boards, an Audit and Quality Assurance Subgroup, and a local Practice Subgroup.

5. Next Steps

5.1 A task group met in early July to consider how the RSCB/ LSCB structure and its functions will be financed. The task group discussed funding formulas, expenditure plans, business support and the use of reserves.

5.2 The WLGA researcher conducted a workshop for members from all LSCBs at the beginning of August. The researcher will work with members of the pilot boards to identify not only how regional boards can conduct their business to achieve effective safeguarding outcomes for children and young people, but also what regulations and guidance will facilitate and support the regional boards develop safe systems and safeguard children. The project is designed to support the regional boards in their own development as well as providing information to the Welsh Government about guidance and regulation that will enable the boards to operate

5.3 Jenny Williams, Chair of the RSCB is also Chair of the National Safeguarding Policy group affiliated to the Association of Directors of Social Services Cymru (ADSSC). In this capacity, the Chair of the North Wales RSCB gave evidence to the Welsh Government's Social Services and Wellbeing Bill Committee on the development of regional safeguarding boards.

Option 1. STATUS QUO

STRENGTHS

- Continuity/familiarity/existing relationships/loyalties
- Less disruption
- Key people in place and easily contacted
- Local understanding: issues/geographical
- Ability to adjust service to local need
- Easier to hold people to account e.g. Statutory Director of Social Services
- Easier to monitor agency effectiveness
- Understanding/knowledge of local services

WEAKNESSES

- Cultural differences, different priorities
- Difficulties appointing Chairs/Vice-Chairs
- Difficulty ensuring impartiality of Chair / vice Chair
- Resourcing – skills and financial resources
- Capacity, staff time
- Duplication: information, training resources
- Lack of shared learning
- Not able to influence WG
- Lower profile locally and with WG

continued

Option 2. A SINGLE NORTH WALES LSCB

STRENGTHS

- Pooled budget
- Staff resource
- Consistency
- Potential greater effectiveness
- Higher level buy in
- Broader range of knowledge and experience
- Clarity on sub group activity
- Greater profile locally and with W.G.
- Shared learning
- Benefits to organisations operating on regional basis (BCUHB, Police, Voluntary Organisations, Probation etc)
- Independence of Chair/Vice-Chair
- Optimises business management
- Skills development as a result of more regular work (e.g. SCR's)

WEAKNESSES

- Relationships with other partnerships and LSB's
- Language/Communication
- Representation of local authorities agenda
- Cultural differences
- Remoteness from operational practice
- Disengagement due to remoteness
- Accountability (currently L.A's)/Governance
- Existing LSCB's differing strengths and weaknesses
- Translating policies to local circumstances
- Membership – size, having your voice heard
- Potential to be as resource intensive as status quo
- Sensitivity to range of Agendas
- Difficulties in holding a large number of agencies to account
- LSCB'S differing strengths and weaknesses

3. Option 3 TWO TIER LSCB : ONE REGION, THREE HUBS

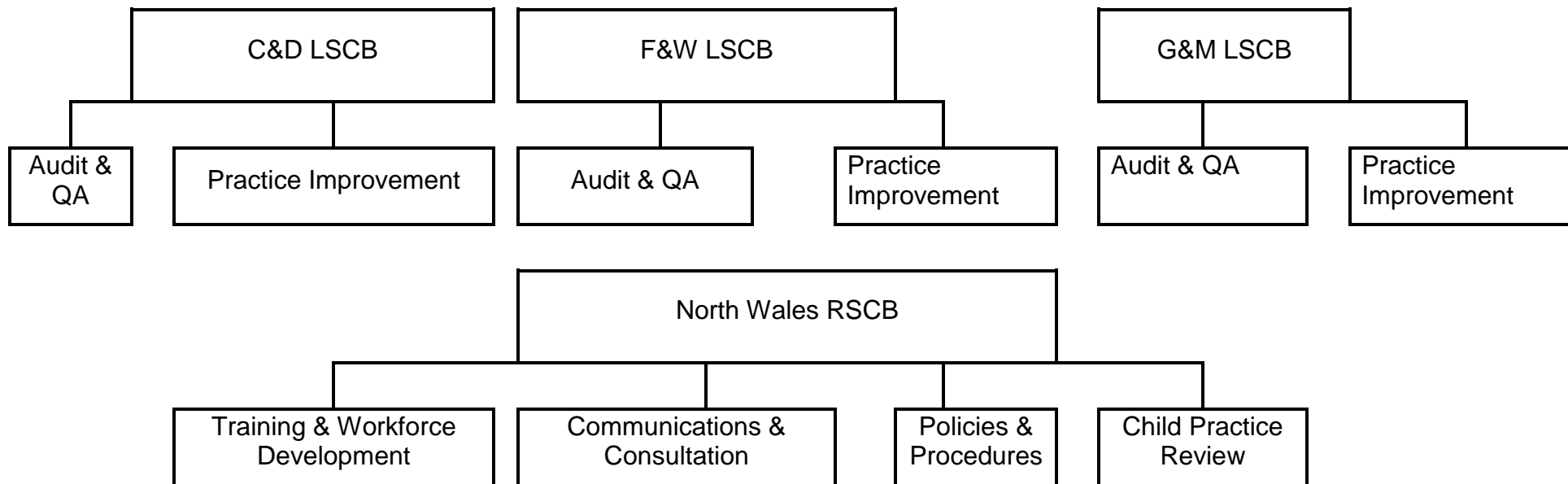
STRENGTHS

- Allows evolution
- Minimises transition problems
- Reduces duplication
- Strengthens membership contributions
- Could function as enabling local operational groups

WEAKNESSES

- Confusion about accountability
- Local becomes too operational
- Getting buy-in to both tiers
- Second Tier may not attract people of sufficiently high level
- Where does accountability sit?
- If Chair/Vice-Chairs on regional board, capacity issue

APPENDIX 2: North Wales Safeguarding Children Boards Structure



N.W. SAFEGUARDING CHILDREN SHADOW BOARD

STATEMENT OF PURPOSE

AIM

- To provide regional strategic co-ordination for what is done by each person or body represented on the Board for the purpose of safeguarding and promoting the welfare of children in the area of the six authorities by which it is established.
- To encourage greater participation and engagement for children and practitioners

DURATION

The shadow board is initially to operate for a twelve month period

ACCOUNTABILITY

The safeguarding responsibilities will remain with the three sub-regional Local Safeguarding Boarding Boards for the period of the pilot who will report to their respective Directors of Social Services and elected members.

FUNCTIONS

Four regional sub-groups have been established to co-ordinate the functions in relation to the following work areas for the region:

1. Training
2. Communication and Consultation
3. Child Practice Reviews
4. Practice and Procedures

Work plans will be devised for the sub-groups to oversee having regard to the Regional Boards' priorities as set out in the annual Strategic Plan.

TASKS

1. Prepare a Regional Safeguarding Children Board plan to consider key priorities.
2. To consider against what measures the project will be evaluated
3. To represent and promote North Wales Safeguarding at a national and regional level and provide feedback to inform the guidance on the Social Care and Wellbeing Bill
4. To consider budget and funding arrangements for LSCBs and SCBs and secure ongoing funding from statutory parties.
5. Consider quarterly reports from regional sub-groups on performance and exceptions and evaluate performance.

Appendix 3

6. To ratify an annual business plan in partnership with the sub-regional LSCBs To prepare an overview of activity reports to accompany annual LSCB reports.
7. Improve participation/engagement
8. To ensure any lessons from Serious Case reviews are disseminated
9. Bring together policies and procedures
10. Arrange a self-assessment and improvement event