

WSCB News

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The News Bulletin of Warwickshire Safeguarding Children Board

A Welcome from Chris Hallett, Chair of WSCB



Welcome to this edition of the Warwickshire Safeguarding Children Board news bulletin. I hope you will find the bulletin useful in keeping you up to date with the agenda in Warwickshire of keeping children safe from harm.

Many of you will be aware that recently there has been a Joint Area Review (JAR) of services provided to children, young people and families in Warwickshire. The JAR's function was to review how well all services link together to provide positive outcomes for children. The process focuses on how well services are provided to vulnerable children on the basis that if these are sound then other services will also be appropriate. A key feature of the JAR was looking at services working together to safeguard children. The work of the Safeguarding Board and all its partners was examined and several Board members were either part of focus groups or interviewed individually. My thanks to everyone who participated as I believe we were able to get across the many positive initiatives and improvements made to keep children safe. I am pleased to inform you that overall the verbal feedback from the Inspectors at the end of the fieldwork fortnight was generally positive and in particular for safeguarding they felt that the services were good. We now await the written report and

further discussion on this before the final report from the JAR Inspectors is published in the Autumn.

One can never ever be complacent about the need to improve services to ensure children remain safe. You will see from this newsletter that much is happening in Warwickshire so as we remain ever vigilant. I just want to draw your attention to the success we had in a publication of the Department for Children, Schools and Families (DCSF) of *Exemplars of LSCB Effective Practice* where the work in Warwickshire has been recognised in two case studies within the booklet, our ambitious new training strategy and the very successful annual conference. Details of these successes are in this news bulletin. However none of this success just happens, it is as the result of many people working together to ensure that our children in Warwickshire get the best possible services to keep them safe. I thank you all for your dedication, efforts and expertise in enabling us to achieve so much.

Enjoy reading the news bulletin.

Government Launches Sex Offender Pilot Scheme in Warwickshire

Few crimes are more damaging, more emotive or more sensitive than sexual offences against children. Earlier this year, the Home Secretary announced that Warwickshire Police Force would be one of four forces to pilot a new approach to developing

the disclosure process when dealing with child sexual offences. Detective Inspector Nigel Jones explains:

"Warwickshire, Hampshire, Cambridgeshire and Cleveland will all pilot the scheme, which

started in September 2008. It will allow parents or guardians of children under 18 to be told if a named individual has previous convictions for sex offences”

At the moment, Multi-Agency Public Protection (MAPP) Authorities may disclose information about an offender’s convictions to another person or group in circumstances where its believed this is necessary to protect the public. “But this pilot” says Nigel, “will for the first time give parents a formal opportunity to contact the police with a request for information. If the individual has convictions for sex offences against children and

poses a risk of causing serious harm to the child concerned, then there is a presumption that the information will be disclosed to help protect them”

As has always been the case when managing cases of sexual harm to children, the pilot will ensure that the police forces participating in the project work closely with local children’s services and Safeguarding Boards to assess and manage any risks that are identified. As Nigel explains, the pilot’s aim is not to introduce a U.S style Megan’s Law or automatic disclosure about child sexual offender details to the general public: “Rather than encourage

offenders to go missing, the aim is to give parents information that will help them to better safeguard their children”.



Any professional who has specific queries about the pilot can speak to Nigel at Warwickshire Police on: 01926 415959.

Safeguarding Board Moves to Strengthen Private Fostering



Since 2005, Local Safeguarding Children Boards (LSCBs) have been responsible for ensuring that children who are privately fostered are better protected. Julia Wilson is

Warwickshire’s Private Fostering Development Officer and is no doubt as to what has led to the drive to make sure that all privately fostered children are known to the authorities:

“The tragic case of Victoria Climbié showed us what can happen when arrangements where a person is looking after someone else’s child are not properly notified or monitored. It is important to realise that private foster carers, like Victoria’s great aunt and her boyfriend, are not recruited, approved or supported by a local authority like Warwickshire County Council or even an Independent Fostering Agency. They are people who by private arrangement are looking after someone else’s child.”

Children who may be privately fostered are:

- Children who attend language schools
- Young people who are temporarily estranged from their parents
- Children at boarding schools who are looked after by someone else during the holidays
- Children on holiday exchanges
- Children brought from abroad with a view to adoption
- Children whose parents are abroad - working or in the armed forces
- Children of unaccompanied asylum seekers
- Minority ethnic children with parents working or studying in the UK

As Julia explains: “The key point is that for an arrangement to be termed as private fostering, a child aged under 16, 18 if disabled, has to have been living with someone other than a parent or close relative for 28 days or more. The law states that the period for which the child is cared for should be continuous, and this is not broken by the occasional short break.”

So what should a professional do when they suspect that a child is not living with their parents or close relative? Julia has the following advice:

- Talk to the adults caring for the child and check if they are aware of the legal obligation to notify Warwickshire County Council that they are caring for a child. They may not know that what they are doing is private fostering
- Give them a leaflet about private fostering - these can be provided by children's teams and Julia

- Reassure them if they have been caring for the child for a while, they will be approached sensitively. Children's Services in Warwickshire want to support and help
- If the adults are aware of the need to notify but refuse to comply, then it is reasonable to say you have a duty to pass on this information.

For more information and advice, contact Julia on: 01926 413325 or visit the *Private Fostering Website* at www.warwickshire.gov.uk

Keeping Sport Safe - WSCB and County Sports Partnership Forge Links



One of the most exciting developments since Warwickshire Safeguarding Children Board was set up has been the development of strategic links between the Board and Coventry, Solihull and Warwickshire Sport Partnership. Jane Waterhouse is the sport's partnership's lead for Safeguarding and Protecting in Sport:

"Across England many children and young people enjoy taking part in sport every week. It has been estimated that 60.5% of young people belong to a sport's club outside school. We all want to ensure that all children

and young people have the best possible experience whilst taking part in a sporting activity."

For this reason, across the Sport Sector, the *NSPCC Child Protection in Sport Unit* have been working with *Sport England* to develop a set of *Standards for Safeguarding and Protecting Children in Sport*. The purpose of these standards is to:

- Help create a safe sporting environment for children and young people
- Provide a benchmark to assist those involved in sport to make informed decisions
- Promote good practice and challenge practice harmful to children and young people.

"Any safe sporting activity should have sound child protection policies, CRB checking, training and education plans, and club

accreditation such as Clubmark" explains Jane, "A good sport club will welcome the opportunity to explain how they are creating a safe environment for children and young people."

The County Sport's Partnership is an Associate Member of WSCB, and Jane ensures that safeguarding children in sport is kept to the fore through her membership of the Board's Strategy and Communication Subcommittee. Anyone who wants to understand more about how key partners can work together to make sport safe can contact Jane on 024 7667 4443, by e-mail at jane@cswsport.org.uk or visit the CSW Sport Website at www.cswsport.org.uk/safe



Voluntary Sector Takes Leading Role in Safeguarding



There can be little doubt that efforts to keep children safe from harm depend hugely on all organisations in every sector working together effectively. In the same way that Warwickshire Safeguarding Children Board has developed strategic links with the County Sport Partnership (see feature in this edition), so it has done the same with colleagues and organisations in the Voluntary Sector as a whole.

The Board now counts among its members at full Board level and in its subcommittees, representatives from Warwickshire Voluntary Community Sector. VCS brings together many of the voluntary organisations in the county that provide important services for children and families. Just a few of these are:

- NCH Action for Children,
- Barnardo's,
- Spurgeons,
- Warwickshire Association of

Youth Clubs Relate

Warwickshire VCS has proved ideally placed to ensure the Safeguarding Board keeps to the fore the contribution that the voluntary sector makes to safeguarding children, particularly in the field of prevention.

A number of other, often relatively small voluntary organisations also make a contribution to the work of the WSCB. One of these is the Friendship Project, whose Chairman is John Hancock:

"The Friendship Project for Children was founded in Warwick District in 1986. Since then it has expanded to cover all areas of Warwickshire and parts of Coventry involving students from Warwick University. The Project recruits volunteers (Older Friends) to befriend vulnerable and socially isolated youngsters (Younger Friends) who are referred by children's teams and more recently via the CAF system (Common Assessment Framework)"

Through regular activities such as swimming, dog walking, cooking, Older Friends build up trusting relationships with their Younger Friends and become a guiding force in their lives. "Sometimes", explains John, "youngsters may disclose

information of a sensitive nature and our volunteers must be prepared to respond appropriately".

The charity has enjoyed a close working relationship with Children's Services which provides resources in kind - office bases; assistance with CRB checks; child protection training; and professional advice and guidance. The Project has also been able to use information and training materials from the Safeguarding Board and as Child Protection Officer for the Project, John is able to cascade these resources to colleagues.

"As a member of the WSCB Strategy and Communication Subcommittee, I feel able to help represent the voluntary sector and raise issues which may be of relevance to other charities, clubs or organisations who work with children", says John. "I am also able to contribute long standing experience, gained prior to retirement, as Head Teacher of a local secondary school".

Interested in becoming a volunteer with the FriendshipProject? Visit www.friendshipproject.co.uk to find out more.

Promoting User Participation in Safeguarding



As part of its drive to explore how the views of children, young people and parents can be best incorporated into child protection processes, WSCB has commissioned a survey of user involvement. The survey was conducted by Michelle King and Rita Luck from the Knowledge and Information Service (KIMS), with the aid of a research grant from the *Children's Workforce Development Council*. Michelle and Rita have presented their findings to a national conference organised by the Council.

Rita and Michelle describe how they conducted the research: "We wanted to find out the extent to which the participation of children and parents is embedded in the child protection process. To do this, we sent out a questionnaire to a sample of children, young people and other family members who have been involved in the child protection process, and conducted interviews with some of those who responded."

Rita and Michelle also invited the views of a sample of professionals from children's social care, schools and health services. Independent Reviewing Officers and members of the Independent Advocacy Service provided in Warwickshire by Barnardos, were interviewed. In addition, three child protection cases were audited from the point of investigation through to discontinuation of the child protection plan: "We wanted to monitor participation throughout the child protection process to get a full picture", explains Michelle.

"The main finding of the research", says Rita "is that we need to do more to promote participation from the point of convening the initial child protection conference."

Three key learning points have emerged:

- Children's Advocacy is highly regarded where it is used – it needs to be used more widely
- The views of parents are often given more weight than those of children and young people – we need to achieve a better balance
- Younger children are least likely to be involved in the process, and alternative, creative methods need to be explored to seek their views.

The Safeguarding Board plans to incorporate these learning points into its training programmes and explore how the views of children, young people and parents can be obtained on a more consistent basis. "The key issue is how effectively professionals can promote the learning points in everyday practice," conclude Michelle and Rita.

See the full report on the WSCB website - go to the Quality and Information Subcommittee's new audit database.

In Brief: New Business Plan Approved

The Board has published its first 3 Year Business Plan. It gives details of the Board's 5 Strategic Objectives for 2008-2011 (*See feature on WSCB Annual Conference*) and lists the key tasks of all the subcommittees. The Plan will be updated annually until the next 3 year Plan is published in 2011. To access the WSCB Business Plan, visit the WSCB web-site at www.warwickshire.gov.uk/wscb

Child Death Review Panel Up and Running



The Warwickshire Child Death Review Panel has been launched. It has begun to review cases in line with the government's requirement that enquiries are made into the causes of all child deaths. The aim is to identify any trends and patterns in these deaths so that steps can be taken to reduce the factors that contribute to child deaths in the Warwickshire, Coventry and Solihull LSCB areas. Any professional needing to notify a child death should contact the Child Death Notifications Officer at: 01926 742394. (The picture shows Panel Members from the Coroner's Office, Health and Ambulance Service, Police, Education, Public Health and Children's Social Care.)

Accolade for WSCB

Work undertaken by Warwickshire Safeguarding Children Board has been recognized in a major new government publication. *Exemplars of LSCB Effective Practice* is a guide produced by the Department for Children, Schools and Families to help Safeguarding Boards increase their effectiveness. It includes two case studies from Warwickshire, one describing partnership working between WSCB and District Councils in the County, and the second focusing on the joint arrangements with Coventry and Solihull LSCBs to set in place child death review processes (see News Short on this subject). The work with district councils has led to the establishment of a new district council subcommittee.

New E-Safety Strategy Planned

Building on earlier work, an E-Safety Working Party is developing a new strategy for Warwickshire. Education Safeguarding Manager John Sullivan tells WSCB News: "We plan to bring the proposed new strategy to the Safeguarding Board in December 2008." In the meantime, look out for the new version of the *WSCB E-Safety*

Information Booklet, which will provide children, parents and professionals with valuable information about e-safety and other safeguarding issues. The booklet will be available in English, Gujarati, Punjabi, Polish and Portuguese, and all these versions will be posted on the WSCB website.

New Information Sharing Protocol Launched

A Multi-Agency Sharing of Information Protocol that has been operating in Warwickshire for some years has been re-launched. Derek Ridgway, *MAPPA and Sharing of Information Coordinator*, has led this work:

"The new protocol has been split into a Level 1 Charter,

which sets out the overarching principles governing the sharing of information across the County. This has been agreed by the Public Service Board of the Local Area Agreement (LAA). There are also two Level 2 Protocols: the Risk of Harm Protocol and the Crime & Disorder Protocol. Both of these have been approved by

Warwickshire Community Safety Partnership (WCSP)." Both the Charter and the Protocols came into force on 1 April 2008 and can be found on Warwickshire County Council website: www.warwickshire.gov.uk. Just type in "access to information" and scroll through the link to *information sharing*.

Major New Training Strategy Launched



The Board's Training Subcommittee has completed the most comprehensive analysis of safeguarding training needs ever undertaken in Warwickshire. Linda Village is the WSCB Interagency Training Officer who has led this work: "I would like to thank everyone who responded to our survey. We looked at child protection training needs from a wide sample of practitioners from agencies represented on the WSCB as well as Associate Members and the Independent Sector"

Questionnaires were sent out between July 2007 – November 2007, and a total of 284 were returned from 11 different agencies that provide services to children and young people in Warwickshire.

One of the key findings of the analysis was that colleagues who work in organisations that have no 'in house' training teams, were finding it difficult to access Child Protection Awareness Training. In response to this, Child Protection Awareness Training sessions are now delivered on a monthly rolling programme by the WSCB Pool of Accredited Trainers. Places on these sessions are prioritised for those agencies which have previously found it difficult to access Child Protection training. Early evaluations of these sessions show a marked increase in attendance of colleagues from District and Borough Councils and the Voluntary and Independent Sector.

The results of the survey endorsed the content of the three WSCB level 2 Interagency Training programmes:

- Working Together to Safeguard Children
- Domestic Abuse and Child Protection and
- Emotional Abuse and Case Management.

These programmes are delivered throughout the year and advertised in the WSCB Training Directory. The WSCB Training Directory can be accessed on the training page of the WSCB web site at www.warwickshire.gov.uk/wscb.

Following this survey, Warwickshire Safeguarding Children Board has endorsed a new Training Strategy for 2008-2011, the most ambitious so far. "Watch out for details of a major new programme on *Attachment and Child Protection*", says Linda.

WSCB Holds Biggest Annual Conference

The Warwickshire Safeguarding Children Board's 5th Annual Conference was held on 30th April this year at the Trident Centre in Leamington Spa. The theme of the conference was the Board's new, more general, areas of responsibility in Preventing Injury and Death in Childhood. The conference was attended by delegates from a wide range of partner agencies, including our associate members.

Martin Cliff is chair of the Strategy and Communication Subcommittee, which is charged with organising the annual conference: "We were fortunate to have two speakers with national credentials. Zoe Keddle from the Audit Commission presented on the prevention of unintentional injury, and Dr. Peter Sidebotham spoke on death in childhood and child death review processes".

The second part of the conference engaged all delegates in group workshops. These provided key issues and development proposals for the Safeguarding Board. In preventing injury, suggestions included the scoping of existing provision and identifying gaps to identify deficits. A strategy will now be developed by a task group which will establish priorities and goals, including considering "hard to reach" groups. It will also focus on linking with other accident prevention organizations, such as the West Midlands Accident Prevention Trust which was represented at the conference, and the voluntary sector.

In considering child deaths and the responsibility to establish a review process, the groups identified links between the prevention of accidents and the impact upon the incidence of child deaths. Issues related to the sensitivities of managing a child death review process were

highlighted, including communicating with parents and professionals. As Martin comments: "engaging with professionals and agencies spotlighted by the processes to ensure their involvement, rather than generating a blame culture, are all seen as significant in achieving useful learning for local preventative work and as a contribution to the national agenda".

Following on from this successful conference, work is already under way in preparing for the next conference in 2009.

