

Working with Local Safeguarding Boards



Role of Local Safeguarding Boards:

Every local authority was required to set up a local safeguarding board (LSB) under the Children Act 2004 and the Working Together to Safeguard Children (DfES 2006,2010) statutory guidance. Some local authorities set up separate safeguarding boards; one for children and young people and one for vulnerable adults, others set up one safeguarding board covering the remit of safeguarding for both groups.

A safeguarding board is a;

multiagency partnership providing strategic leadership for the development of safeguarding policy and practice, consistent with national policy and best practice.

(Cheshire East Local Safeguarding Board)

They work in a variety of ways across the country.

LSBs are now the key system in every locality of the country for organisations to come together to agree on how they will cooperate with one another to safeguard and promote the welfare of children. The purpose of this partnership working is to hold each other to account and to ensure safeguarding children remains high on the agenda across their region. This principle applies equally to vulnerable adults.

Statutory membership of LSBs includes representatives from social care, health, housing, probation, police, fire, crown prosecution service (CPS) and the third sector. Many areas find that education is represented on their LSB, but this representation is very often limited to schools.

All organisations working with children and young people, and/or vulnerable adults must ensure that they have safe practices and child protection procedures in place. Therefore local LSB should support in two ways:

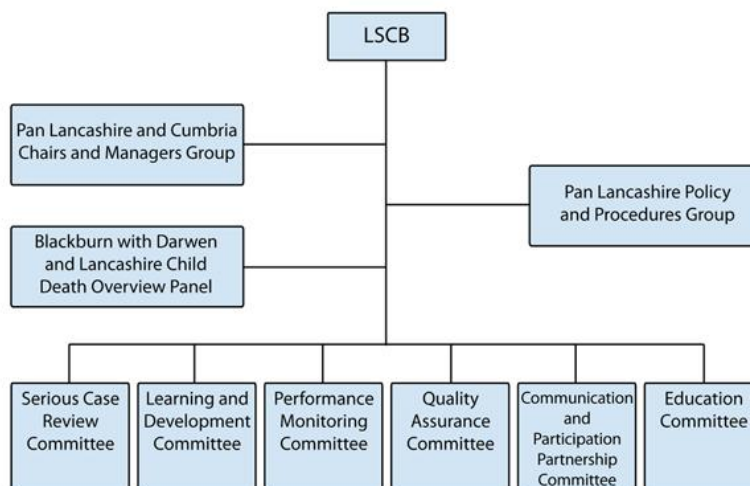
- firstly in providing advice and guidance in relation to safeguarding policies and procedures and,
- secondly in providing organisations with the opportunity to attend training courses for safeguarding and promoting the welfare of children and vulnerable adults .

Within every local safeguarding board is a Local Authority Designated Officer (LADO). Their responsibilities are set out in Working Together to Safeguard Children (DfE 2010), and include:

- Management and oversight of individual cases from all partner agencies if the allegation appears to meet the thresholds laid out in the guidance, i.e. that someone has:
 - behaved in a way that has harmed, or may have harmed, a child
 - possibly committed a criminal offence against, or related to, a child; or
 - behaved towards a child or children in a way that indicates s/he is unsuitable to work with children.
- Providing advice, information and guidance to employers and voluntary organisations
- Liaising with the police, social care, CPS and other agencies as needed
- Monitoring the progress of cases, through to their final conclusion
- Ensuring a consistent, fair and thorough process for all adults working with children and young people, and vulnerable adults against whom allegations are made
- Maintaining information databases in relation to all allegations and concerns
- Contributing to relevant safeguarding training for local organisations
- Development of relevant single and inter agency policy, procedures and practice

Structures of LSBs vary – some larger LSBs have a range of sub-committees by subject area, whereas some are broken down by geographical area. For example,

Blackburn with Darwen



The challenges:

Making links with LSBs appears to be one of the areas some providers continue to find challenging, even those who are deemed to be doing very well on their safeguarding practice overall. Feedback from the sector indicates that some boards are difficult to get hold of and find contact details for, whilst others appear to be reluctant to engage with the sector. This may be for a variety of reasons, but LSBs need to ensure they are representing the sector appropriately, and likewise providers need to ensure that their sector is appropriately represented.

Of those providers who have made effective links with their boards, some have good working relationships with the children's board, but struggle to make links with the adult board despite many of their learners being over 18, and others have links only with the adult board, despite having younger learners.

Good practice in the sector:

Many providers have managed to establish good working relationships with their safeguarding boards. Some have been involved in their work since their inception, others have managed to develop links since. From feedback, it seems like this can be a challenging process which needs time and persistence (one provider described the process as “elbowing” their way in) but one that is necessary and worthwhile. Several providers state that they used their contacts and networks to find the correct person to speak to in order to find a way onto the board or its subcommittee. Several providers with good links suggested that the most successful approach might be to ask the LSB how you can support them in their work. One college makes a financial contribution to the board, but this will not always be necessary or possible. One college works very closely with the LSB and has developed a safeguarding audit tool which it has shared with the sector through the LSB, and also delivers training on their behalf. They see the benefits to their organisation as enabling them to keep up to date with good practice and developments in safeguarding, and assuring their own board of governors that their involvement and practice around safeguarding is taken very seriously.

Some organisations in the sector sit on either the adult or children’s board, or the one board in their area as a representative for the sector. The view seems to be that it is useful for a provider with young and adult learners to sit on either board if both are not available, as there is a great deal of overlap with safeguarding issues generally, and some boards with have cross representation and share good practice between them, such as in Plymouth.

If you are looking to gain access to your board it would be worth contacting them to find out if there is a sector representative and making links with them. If there is not, perhaps linking with other providers and offering to be the sector representative might give you more to offer the board when making links. Some providers have suggested that some boards need it highlighted that post 16+ needs more representation on these boards as they are a key player in the lives of some of the most vulnerable young people and adults in society as they experience transitions between children’s and adult services. Others have suggested that the boards need convincing that work-based learning providers are an essential and under-represented group.

Some providers sit on their board purely as a representative of their own organisation. Sometimes this is because they are the largest provider in their area, in other cases this is simply how the relationship has evolved. It may be helpful from the LSBs perspective, as well as that of the sector, that those with a place on the board or a subcommittee act in a representative capacity, so as not to exclude the potentially large number of other providers which may exist in the location.

Shrewsbury College of Arts and Technology does, and Halton and St Helens Voluntary and Community Action act as representatives of the sector. They do this by circulating papers and inviting comments before board meetings, circulating minutes after meetings or sharing key information in e-bulletins, and meeting with the sector to disseminate good practice around key issues. Others, such as Plymouth College, have established core function group meetings either within or across local authority areas, such as Designated Officer Groups, to share good practice and policy developments.

Northern College for Residential Adult Education made links originally through the local Prevent Group who had a representative from the LSB sitting on it. Another, Essex Adult Education, invited the Communication Partnership Officer onto their task group which enabled good links with the LSB.

Safeguarding boards can critique and ratify an organisation's safeguarding policies and procedures, and asking them to do this for a provider might be a way of making initial contact, whilst reassuring your organisation that your policies and procedures are fit for purpose.

Training or education sub-groups are often a helpful way in to the Board. The children and schools contact can be a good person to make contact with initially, as can the LADO.

One college's work with and for the LSCB has enabled them to become a key player in the city's safeguarding work, establishing links between colleges and other institutions to disseminate good practice and feedback. It has effective working relationships with other providers, working to improve the safety and welfare of the young people and vulnerable adults in the area, and derives a great deal of benefit from the relationship, but offers a lot to the board in terms of time and resources, in order to make this relationship mutually beneficial.

Key messages:

- **Be persistent**
- **Speak to your contacts in the sector and see if anyone knows a contact on the board**
- **Offer to contribute resources, time, expertise,**
- **Gain access to the children's or adults board (if both are applicable to your organisation)**
- **Remind them of the importance of the sector's role with young people and vulnerable adults**
- **Offer to be a representative of your sector**

Resources:

Good practice by Local Safeguarding Children Boards; Ofsted. Available at <http://www.ofsted.gov.uk/resources/good-practice-local-safeguarding-children-boards>

Working Together to Safeguard Children; 2006, 2010. <http://www.workingtogetheronline.co.uk/>

Many thanks for the contributions from the sector to this briefing