

# Local Safeguarding Children Boards – how relevant are they to Health Visitors?

**Health visitors play a key role in safeguarding children from neglect or abuse, and a significant part of the workload of all health visitors will be working with families where the children are subject of a Child Protection Plan.**

As the only service with universal access to young families, health visitors are often the first professionals to be picking up concerns about the wellbeing of young children. Hence, health visitors will be familiar with their local safeguarding children procedures and most will have experience of attending and participating in strategy discussions and child protection conferences. Health visitors will also be familiar with contributing to the protection plan around the child and in providing enhanced levels of support to families where there is a greater risk to the wellbeing of the children.

This briefing note deals with the role of the local safeguarding children board and how they work to oversee local safeguarding children's systems and hold partner agencies to account.

## Local Safeguarding Children Board

Local Safeguarding Children Boards (LSCBs) were introduced by the Children Act (2004). All councils with social services responsibilities in England must establish a board which brings together partners within the locality and oversees the effectiveness of local procedures to safeguard children.

Whilst it is the responsibility of the local authority to establish the board, it is the statutory duty of all partners to work together and to participate in the work of the Board.

## Membership of Safeguarding Children Boards

Boards have an independent chairperson – appointed by the Local Authority and statutory partners. Most chairs have had many years of experience in an area relevant to safeguarding. Many will be retired directors of Children's Social Care, or be retired senior police officers. Others may come from an educational or social policy background. The board is made up of senior officers from the main statutory agencies in the locality. They should be senior enough within their own organisation to be able to make decisions and commit resources – typically chief executives or directors. It also includes representatives from local schools, the voluntary sector and lay members – recruited to bring a further challenge to the system.

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For additional fact sheets see [www.ihv.org.uk](http://www.ihv.org.uk)

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Local Authority	Councillors	Local NHS	Police & Criminal Justice	Education	Voluntary Sector	Lay members
Director of Children Services	The Cabinet member for Children's Services	The local CCG - Chief Operating Officer	Local Police Commander	Representatives of Heads of secondary, primary and nursery schools	(e.g.) Chief Officer of local voluntary agencies providing services to children and families	Bringing a lay person's perspective to safeguarding children
Assistant Director or Head of Safeguarding		The designated Doctor and Nurse for Child Protection	Senior officer from Police Children Protection team for the area	Representatives of colleges		
Director of Public Health		NHS Community Trust - CEO or senior director	Chief Probation Officer or deputy for the area			
Senior officer from Adults Social Care		NHS Acute trust – Director of Nursing or Safeguarding lead	Governors of local Prisons or Youth Offender Institutions			

## Local Safeguarding Children Boards and Health Visitors

### What do Boards actually do?

#### Thresholds, Early Help and targeted services

The board is responsible for drawing up and agreeing key documents and procedures that govern the way that agencies work together. A critical example of such is the local Thresholds Policy which defines the criteria for access to services and, importantly, helps agencies to understand what level of risk or need each service is tasked to work with.

#### They will be responsible for drawing up key strategies

Key strategies such as early help strategy – this will cover the range of services aimed at providing early help and preventative interventions locally. It will define how they relate to other services and how cases can move from prevention or early help into a more targeted intervention.

#### Child Sexual Exploitation and emerging risks

LSCBs will have agreed a child sexual exploitation strategy, and will be actively seeking assurances from all agencies including social care and the police on how they are working to identify those children at risk, how they are tackling and reducing those risks. Boards will expect to see a commitment from all agencies to be part of the overall approach to reducing actual and risks of child sexual exploitation.

Boards are also turning their attention to emerging risks like female genital mutilation, missing children and forced marriages.

#### Quality and Auditing

Boards will also commission regular audits of casework to test how effective agencies are at managing complex cases. These multi-agency audits are critical in ensuring that problems are spotted and learning put in place. They can also identify and celebrate examples of good practice.

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### Training

LSCBs also commission or provide multi-agency safeguarding training, providing regular opportunities for staff to maintain their knowledge on child protection and learning together with professionals from other agencies.

### Serious Case Reviews

Another key role of the LSCB is to commission reviews of critical cases that are seen to have failed to properly protect a child. In most instances where a child subject to a child protection plan dies or is seriously injured, the board is required to commission such a review.

Serious Case Reviews (SCRs) seek to identify learning from a case with the aim of improving the way that agencies work together. The SCR is not part of a disciplinary process, although it may well identify failings of individuals or agencies as it looks closely into what happened and what went wrong. Serious case reviews are usually published. You can read reviews, the action plans and learning from reviews in your area on your local LSCB's website.

### Child Death Overview panel

LSCBs are also responsible for convening the Child Death Overview Panel (CDOP). This body reviews the circumstances of all deaths of children in the area, considering whether any further investigations should take place, and to look for any emerging trends or risk locally.

### How can I find out about the LSCB in my area?

All LSCBs have their own websites. You can search for this quite easily on the internet. In most cases this is as simple as googling "Name of Council LSCB".

The Care Quality Commission (CQC) also undertakes periodic inspections of LSCBs. These take place at the same time that the CQC inspects the Council's Children Social Care Services. Inspections will grade LSCBs as Outstanding, Good, Requiring Improvement or Inadequate.

### How can health visitors play a part in the work of LSCBs?

The Trust that employs health visitors in an area will be represented on the LSCB, most often by its chief executive

or perhaps the director of Children's Services or director of Nursing.

However, boards also operate a number of sub committees and groups, and these comprise key professionals from those same partner agencies.

The voice of health visitors can add real front line experience to the work of these groups. Safeguarding board business managers are always looking at how they can strengthen these sub groups and would be interested in hearing from professionals who would be able to contribute towards the work of the groups.

You may also be asked to contribute to a case review or audit. This is an important way of ensuring that agencies are working well together, are able to learn from experience and are able to challenge, in a constructive way, instances where things could have been done better.

LSCBs will also undertake activities locally to increase the awareness of child protection, and highlighting local risks. These may include information days or distributing publicity. They will also organise multi-agency training available to health visitors and other professionals, and organise periodic conferences and workshops on key local issues. You can keep in touch with your local LSCB and ensure that you share information and news from the board with your colleagues and your team.

### References and further reading

Children's Act 2004 (Chapter 3)

[bit.ly/1MpMMBg](http://bit.ly/1MpMMBg)

Working together to Safeguard children:

[bit.ly/1P3TjBw](http://bit.ly/1P3TjBw)

Care Quality Commission – Safeguarding Children Inspection Programme

[bit.ly/1PYmNYp](http://bit.ly/1PYmNYp)

Published CQC Child Protection Inspection reports

[bit.ly/1WonGO9](http://bit.ly/1WonGO9)

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