



Safeguarding Children: Guidance for Lead Members

London Councils has published a new resource for Lead Members for Children's Services 'An introduction to safeguarding: guidance for lead members for children's services'. This briefing alerts members to this important new guidance and provides a summary of its content.

Overview

The new guidance document: 'An introduction to safeguarding: guidance for lead members for children's services' was commissioned by the London Councils' Lead Member network and funded by the London region Sector Led Improvement programme.

The publication offers a succinct and up-to-date overview of the key issues and recent policy and practice changes, including:

- the role and responsibilities for safeguarding as Lead Members for Children's Services (LMCS) and what 'good' looks like in regard to local safeguarding practices
- what questions to ask to ascertain with confidence your council's performance
- how to champion safeguarding through relationships with officers, members and partners
- the national safeguarding agenda for Children's Services in 2013
- where to go if you need more information or support.

An outline of the key legal responsibilities is included. This includes essential information about the recommendations from the Munro review, the Troubled Families programme and an introduction to the new Ofsted single integrated framework for children in need of help and protection, children looked after and care leavers, due for introduction in the Autumn of 2013.

The guidance will be of use to both new LMCS and established LMCS seeking a refresher, as well as other members with an interest in safeguarding responsibilities. The guidance is available to download from the London Councils website (see links panel at the end of this briefing).

What you should know: your legal role and responsibilities

This section of the guidance introduces key legal duties from the Children Act 1989 and Children Act 2004, specifically those sections of legislation dealing with safeguarding and child protection, which establish the foundation for and statutory basis of the LMCS role.

As well as explaining the role of the LMCS this chapter also sets out the key responsibilities of:

- the Local Safeguarding Children Board
- the Director of Children’s Services
- the Leader of the Council
- the Chief Executive

What you should see: what does good looks like?

This section pulls together work by a number of national agencies to articulate what a ‘good’ safeguarding and child protection service should look like. In doing this, the section also explores the review by Lord Carlile in 2012 of child protection services in Doncaster, which suffered a number of high profile child protection failings over a period between 2005 and 2009. Lord Carlile concluded that the dysfunction had been:

“Caused by an absence of professional leadership resulting from a series of interim director appointments. Further, a lack of political vision for Children’s Services caused by inter and intra party conflict and the newness of the elected mayoral system provided an inadequate foundation for service management and development. The situation was compounded by high staff turnover, the unregulated and excessive use of agency staff, a breakdown of trust between partners characterised by an inadequate multi-agency safeguarding system, a lack of robust safeguarding policies and procedures to give guidance to staff, and poorly organised ‘front door’ and triaging arrangements which were unable to deliver even a basic assessment service.”

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The chapter offers a framework for ‘good’ which draws together seven essential factors:

The seven essential factors for effective safeguarding: a framework



What you should ask: finding out what's happening in your council

Using the seven key factors, this section offers LMCS a detailed guide to how to begin to explore how your council is doing. This takes the format of describing what 'good' might look like for each factor and suggests questions to ask yourself and others within the council and the wider partnership.

The guidance is detailed, but not exhaustive. It offers a point from which to start your discussions and the basis for understanding how the complex arrangements which underpin your services connect up to offer a 'good' experience to the children and families you support. Crucially, this approach, while grounded in experience, will only offer snapshot - so it is important to monitor and assure yourselves regularly of how you are doing in these areas.

What you should know: key themes for safeguarding in 2013

This chapter introduces the LMCS to the national themes currently impacting on Children's Services to place in context the challenges and priorities within safeguarding services. The following current priorities are explored:

- The Munro Review
- Improving strategic partnerships
- Prevention and early intervention
- Troubled Families
- Tackling Child Sexual Exploitation
- New inspection arrangements.

The guide concludes with useful signposts to further information and support, which should give an excellent foundation for you as an LMCS to work from in providing the best possible safeguarding and child protection sources.

Commentary

The role of the LMCS is almost unique in its complexity and statutory responsibilities. The range of issues the portfolio connects with and includes mean that by itself it can occupy the whole time of a member, before ward responsibilities are even considered. Safeguarding and child protection are just part of that range of responsibilities, but for some of the most vulnerable children and young people in London, these are the services that can make the difference in achieving a safe and fulfilling life.

This guide is intended to assist both the new LMCS and established Lead Member seeking a refresher to navigate the changing safeguarding and child protection landscape, to identify the essential factors to delivering a 'good' service and to know best how to ensure key partners are supported and held to account. This guide is not a panacea for all the challenges you'll face as the LMCS, but provides a good starting point for your enquiries and an authoritative source of where to go for more information.

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Links:

[Read or download the full publication: An introduction to safeguarding: guidance for lead members for children's services](#)

This member briefing has been circulated to:

[Portfolio holders and those members who requested policy briefings in the following categories: Children and Young People](#)