

Leicester, Leicestershire and Rutland Local Safeguarding Children Board Communication Strategy

July 2007 – March 2009

Aims of the Strategy

The purpose of the Communications strategy is to ensure that the Leicester, Leicestershire and Rutland Local Safeguarding Children Board (LSCB) fully discharges its core responsibility to:

“communicate to people and bodies in the area the need to safeguard and promote the welfare of children, raising awareness of how this can best be done, and encouraging them to do so” (Working Together, 2006 page 80).

The LSCB is committed to an inclusive and participative approach to development, design and review of services which includes communication directly with service users

Objectives of the strategy

1. To promote public awareness in the wider community – including faith, black and minority communities – about how everybody can contribute to safeguarding and promoting the welfare of children.
2. To promote awareness across organisations within the area – both statutory and independent and voluntary agencies – of how they should co-operate to safeguard and promote the welfare of children and ensure that developments in safeguarding practice are widely communicated
3. To ensure an effective process for communicating with the media, thereby promoting public confidence in the arrangements for safeguarding and promoting the welfare of children.

Actions

- 1. To promote public awareness in the wider community – including faith, black and minority communities – about how everybody can contribute to safeguarding and promoting the welfare of children.**
 - Specific targeted campaigns as directed by the communications subcommittee
 - Business plan routinely to include projects which seek to engage with specific vulnerable groups and ensure that work with those groups is well-co-ordinated and effective in reducing inequality of access to services

2. To promote awareness across organisations within the area – both statutory and independent agencies – of how they should co-operate to safeguard and promote the welfare of children

Good quality inter-agency communication is key to ensuring good quality work to safeguard children. Achieving this includes:

- Ensuring that comprehensive and consistent information sharing protocols cover all safeguarding situations
- Promoting the use of the chapter 23 on resolving professional differences

Each major piece of work undertaken by the LSCB should have a project plan. A communications plan is an essential part of the plan.

Defining the target audience is important to ensure that issues around diversity and language are addressed. The plan should include a range of methods suitable for the defined target audience, which ensures messages are received and understood. Consultation and feedback should always be built into the process.

The following questions may assist

- Who needs to know about this? Who could help us with this?
- What do they need to know? What can they tell us?
- When do they need to know? When do we need to know their views?
- How best will they receive the information, understand it and action it?
- Who should communicate it?
- How will we evaluate if the communication plan has succeeded?

The Communications subcommittee has the responsibility to ensure that communication is embedded into project plans and implemented and should ensure:

- the website and bi-annual newsletter communicates key issues in regard to safeguarding children and promotion of their welfare
- the availability of the child protection procedures and practice guidance
- All printed material is catalogued and reviewed.

3. To ensure an effective process for communicating with the media, thereby promoting public confidence in the arrangements for safeguarding and promoting the welfare of children

Effective communications can contribute to the smooth implementation of a change, project or initiative and it can mitigate negative media.

The LSCB media strategy is intended to ensure a co-ordinated response of LSCB agencies to specific media requests. This should always promote the key message that achieving good outcomes for children requires all those with responsibility for assessment and provision of services to work together to an agreed plan of action that is joined up between organisations involved.

In particular, we must ensure that the impact of any communication produced by one agency does not negatively impact on a partner agency, resulting in this compromising a partner agencies ability to safeguard children from harm or inhibit their ability to promote children's welfare.

Responsive media statements may be necessary when there is a case issue involving a specific child or children, or where there is negative media coverage of key safeguarding matters which needs to be confronted..

Proactive use of the media to promote good safeguarding messages should be a routine part of any public awareness campaign. Any communication with the media in the name of the LSCB will require approval from the Chair/Vice chairs.

Responding to high profile events which impact on children

Chair/Vice chair/relevant agency senior rep to agree whether the LSCB or a single agency lead is most appropriate. If the LSCB is the lead, consideration must still be given to the political dimension of some member agencies and ensure that relevant elected members are kept informed prior to the release of media statements.

Chair /Vice-chair to identify need to either approve a media statement (if an immediate response is required) or arrange a media communications meeting to include senior agency representation

- A discussion will take place between LSCB agencies involved and a lead agency will be nominated to co-ordinate the media response.
- A clear action plan will be identified with a mutually agreed written media response.
- The nominated LSCB lead agency will provide all other agencies involved of relevant contact information and a named individual to co-ordinate the LSCB response.
- Where any of the LSCB agencies involved are contacted they will advise the media of the lead agency.
- Where it is considered appropriate proactive action should take place and local media should be informed where issues can be anticipated.

All important electronic communications requiring actions to be forwarded to generic e-mail address – lscb@leics.gov.uk
