

SLOUGH BOROUGH COUNCIL

REPORT TO: Education & Children's Services **DATE:** 19 July 2016
Scrutiny Panel

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PART I **FOR COMMENT & CONSIDERATION**

SLOUGH BOROUGH COUNCIL'S SECTION 11 AUDIT

1 Purpose of Report

1.1 This report sets out the key themes that emerged from a recent Section 11 Audit of Slough Borough Council services against the 8 Section 11 strands.

2 Recommendation(s)/Proposed Action

2.1 That the Panel consider the action plan for implementing the necessary changes identified during the Section 11 audit.

3. The Slough Joint Wellbeing Strategy, the JSNA and the Five Year Plan

3a. Slough Joint Wellbeing Strategy Priorities

Priorities:

- Health
- Economy and Skills
- Regeneration and Environment
- Housing
- Safer Communities

Section 11 of the Children Act 2004 places a duty on a range of organisations and individuals to ensure their functions, and any services that they contract out to others, are discharged having regard to the need to safeguard and promote the welfare of children.

Specifically, Section 11 places a duty on local authorities that provide children's and other types of services, including children's and adult social care services, public health, housing, sport, culture and leisure services, licensing and youth services.

The responsibilities of Section 11 cut across services which support all the priorities within the Slough Joint Wellbeing Strategy.

3b Five Year Plan Outcomes

The responsibilities of Section 11 cut across services which support all the outcomes within the Five Year Plan, with a specific focus on:

- Slough will be one of the safest places in the Thames Valley
- More people will take responsibility and manage their own health, care and support needs
- Children and young people in Slough will be healthy, resilient and have positive life chances

4 **Other Implications**

a) Financial

There are no financial implications of proposed action.

b) Risk Management

There are no risks identified in relation to the recommendation in this report.

c) Human Rights Act and Other Legal Implications

Section 11 of the Children Act 2004 places a duty on a range of organizations and individuals to ensure their functions and any services that they contract out to others, are discharged having regard to the need to safeguard and promote the welfare of children.

d) Equalities Impact Assessment

There is no identified need for the completion of an EIA in relation to this report.

5 **Section 11 of the Children Act 2004**

5.1 Section 11 of the Children Act 2004 places duties on a range of organisations and individuals to ensure their functions, and any services that they contract out to others, are discharged having regard to the need to safeguard and promote the welfare of children.

5.2 Section 11 places a duty on:

- Local authorities and district councils that provide children's and other types of services, including children's and adult social care services, public health, housing, sport, culture and leisure services, licensing authorities and youth services.

5.3 These organisations should have in place arrangements that reflect the importance of safeguarding and promoting the welfare of children, including:

- A clear line of accountability for the commissioning and/or provision of services designed to safeguard and promote the welfare of children;
- A senior board level lead to take leadership responsibility for the organisation's safeguarding arrangements;
- A culture of listening to children and taking account of their wishes and feelings, both in individual decisions and the development of services;

- Clear whistleblowing procedures, which reflect the principles in Sir Robert Francis' Freedom to Speak Up review and are suitably referenced in staff training and codes of conduct, and a culture that enables issues about safeguarding and promoting the welfare of children to be addressed;
- Arrangements which set out clearly the processes for sharing information, with other professionals and with the Local Safeguarding Children Board (LSCB);
- A designated professional lead for safeguarding. Their role is to support other professionals in their agencies to recognise the needs of children, including rescue from possible abuse or neglect. Designated professional roles should always be explicitly defined in job descriptions. Professionals should be given sufficient time, funding, supervision and support to fulfil their child welfare and safeguarding responsibilities effectively;
- Safe recruitment practices for individuals whom the organisation will permit to work regularly with children, including policies on when to obtain a criminal record check;
- Appropriate supervision and support for staff, including safeguarding training:
 - Employers are responsible for ensuring that their staff are competent to carry out their responsibilities for safeguarding and promoting the welfare of children and creating an environment where staff feel able to raise concerns and feel supported in their safeguarding role;
 - Staff should be given a mandatory induction, which includes familiarisation with child protection responsibilities and procedures to be followed if anyone has any concerns about a child's safety or welfare; and
 - All professionals should have regular reviews of their own practice to ensure they improve over time.
- Clear policies in line with those from the LSCB for dealing with allegations against people who work with children. Such policies should make a clear distinction between an allegation, a concern about the quality of care or practice or a complaint.

5.4 The section 11 audit assesses the council against 8 standards:

- 1) Senior management have commitment to the importance of safeguarding and promoting children's welfare.
- 2) There is a clear statement of the agency's responsibility towards children and this is available to all staff.
- 3) There is a clear line of accountability within the organisation for work on safeguarding and promoting welfare.
- 4) Service development takes into account the need to safeguard and promote welfare and is informed, where appropriate, by the views of children and families.
- 5) There is effective training on safeguarding and promoting the welfare of children for all staff working with or, depending on the agencies primary functions, in contact with children and families.
- 6) Safer recruitment procedures including vetting procedures and those for managing allegations are in place.
- 7) There is effective inter-agency working to safeguard and promote the welfare of children.
- 8) There is effective Information Sharing.

5.5 Throughout the self assessment, there must be evidence of improved outcomes for children, young people and their families as a result of the arrangements the council has in place.

6 Responding to the Council's Section 11 audit

6.1 The council undertook a Section 11 audit between November 2015 and January 2016, with all the council's directorates participating in this exercise.

6.2 An action plan is being developed which will identify timescales and key officers who will take the activities forward. Key activities to be undertaken are listed in Appendix A.

7 Next Steps

The council's Corporate Management Team have considered the results of the audit and proposed actions, and an action plan developed to take these forward.

The governance arrangements around implementing the action plan require the Director of Children's Services to report back to the Corporate Management Team on a quarterly basis, setting out progress made and to highlight any issues that need addressing.

It is also proposed that the Corporate Management Team undertake a lessons learned exercise from the completion of the section 11 audit, to see how the process can be improved for the next time that it completes the audit.

8 Comments of Other Committees

The Slough Local Safeguarding Children Board considered the findings of the council's Section 11 audit and welcomed the proposed actions set out in the action plan, in order to strengthen the council's response to its duties under section 11 of the Children Act 2004.

9 Conclusion

The Section 11 audit undertaken by Slough Borough Council in November 2015 – January 2016 assessed the council's performance against the duties placed upon it in Section 11 of the Children Act 2004 to have regard to the need to safeguard and promote the welfare of children.

The key actions that the council needs to undertake following the results of that audit will ensure that the council meets its duties in this regard.

10 Appendices Attached

A - Section 11 key activities

11 Background Papers

None.