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# LGA Peer Review – Children’s Safeguarding

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<b>Committee considering report:</b>	Children and Young People Scrutiny Committee
<b>Date of Committee:</b>	5 <sup>th</sup> June 2025
<b>Portfolio Member:</b>	Councillor Heather Codling
<b>Date Portfolio Member agreed report:</b>	13 March 2025
<b>Report Author:</b>	Rebecca Wilshire

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## 1 Purpose of the Report

This report is to share the feedback, findings and recommendation from a recent LGA Peer Review in Children’s Services.

## 2 Recommendation(s)

The recommendation is that findings are considered and where required supported so all recommendations can be fully implemented.

## 3 Implications and Impact Assessment

Implication	Commentary
<b>Financial</b>	<p>There is no financial implication in this report, the report is feeding back the findings from a recent LGA Peer Review</p> <p>However, some recommendations may require financial support, and this would be explored further if needed as some area will be addressed within the Transformation Funding already agreed.</p>
<b>Human Resource:</b>	There are no HR implications in this report
<b>Legal:</b>	There are no legal implications in this report
<b>Risk Management:</b>	There are no risk management implications in this report
<b>Property:</b>	There are no property implications in this report

<b>Policy:</b>				
	<b>Positive</b>	<b>Neutral</b>	<b>Negative</b>	<b>Commentary</b>
<b>Equalities Impact:</b>				
<b>A</b> Are there any aspects of the proposed decision, including how it is delivered or accessed, that could impact on inequality?		X		There is no impact on equalities within this report. The report and its attachments are intended to feedback on a recent LGA Peer Review
<b>B</b> Will the proposed decision have an impact upon the lives of people with protected characteristics, including employees and service users?		X		
<b>Environmental Impact:</b>		X		There is no environment impact from report
<b>Health Impact:</b>		X		There is no health impact from this report
<b>ICT Impact:</b>		X		There are no ICT implications with this report
<b>Digital Services Impact:</b>		X		

<b>Council Strategy Priorities:</b>		X		This report supports Council Priorities:  1) Services we are proud of  2) Fairer West Berkshire with opportunities for all
<b>Core Business:</b>	X			The findings of the LGA Peer Review fully support core business around safeguarding children e
<b>Data Impact:</b>		X		There is no data impact.
<b>Consultation and Engagement:</b>	LGA Peer Review engage with a variety of practitioners and partners and included engagement with families.			

## 4 Executive Summary

- 4.1 West Berkshire Council requested a LGA Peer Review on their Family Safeguarding Model. The rationale for this was linked to ensuring we have the right safeguards in place and exploring any gaps there may be.
- 4.2 Many areas of children services are under regular and rigorous scrutiny, this comes in many forms of auditing, focus visit from Ofsted, inspection activity, external audit and multi-agency audit. Therefore, we consider we know ourselves well.
- 4.3 Over the last 18 months, there has been a focus on Children in Care, Care Leavers had a Focus visit from Ofsted and the Front Door always has some form of audit and reviewing activity taking place, and Children with Disability from January also had a full audit of all children in place due to concerns in this area. Therefore, the decision of focus for the LGA was linked to Safeguarding Teams.
- 4.4 Over the last 18 months there have been concerns relating to practice and relating to safeguarding and statutory duties, however, changes in leadership, building a service built on high support, high challenge and high expectations have started to take effect to improve areas of practice, support to children and support to the wellbeing of staff who work for us. We have seen several improvements being made, therefore the LGA Peer Review felt it was the right time to assess where we are at, assure ourselves we know ourselves well, and consider any further areas for development.

## 5 Supporting Information

5.1 Feedback Slides from LGA, see Appendix 1

5.2 Feedback Letter from LGA, see Appendix 2

### 5.3 Key Lines of Enquiry (KLOE)

- (a) Is there evidence that the Family Safeguarding Model is being utilised to its full potential
- (b) Is there evidence of Management Oversight, Case Supervision, which is child led, and child centred and of good quality, with evidence of the child's voice throughout
- (c) Is there evidence of good decision making when children are considered to be at risk of harm
- (d) Is there evidence of Child Protection oversight from Child Protection Chairs
- (e) Is there evidence of children being safeguarded who are not in full time education?

5.4 Draft Feedback Letter provides an overview.

## 6 Proposals/Recommendations

### 6.1 Recommendation 1: Clarify and strengthen the governance and delivery arrangements for early help with partners

- (a) Early help is a key area to be developed to ensure a positive impact on the numbers of children in need, child protection plans and the stability to deliver the family safeguarding model. Addressing the strategy, action plan, and partnership buy-in as a priority is necessary to ensure that the impact is clearly demonstrated.

### 6.2 Use governance structures to develop resilience; not just a one council approach, a whole West Berkshire approach.

- (a) Ensure full engagement from the integrated care board (ICB) to shared priorities, actions and possibly funding. A partnership rich, strategic SEND board could be put in place to map out joint commissioning work as well as the development of shared priorities related to health, SEND and voluntary services support. A review of Education Partnership arrangements may be prudent to explore a forum to agree joint endeavours between schools and the local authority outside of statutory and school led forums. Agreements need to be in place for complex needs with a shared commitment to partnership solutions and shared funding agreements.

### 6.3 Review governance and programme management arrangements:

- (a) There are a number of initiatives being taken forward at the same time, including workforce development, the embedding of the family safeguarding model and the child in need pilot (CiN). Determine which areas of work are priorities at any one

moment. Ensure that attention is given to these and outcomes achieved against defined strategic objectives, so that focus can then shift to another area.

**6.4 Undertake a desktop review of children missing education.**

- (a) Consider commissioning an independent and external review of existing practices and governance arrangements so you are satisfied that they are fit for purpose.

**6.5 Review the SEF to fully reflect achievements, developments and future direction.**

- (a) The current SEF document does not provide a full and evidenced portrait of the challenges for children and their families in West Berkshire - and how these are being addressed. There is a clear self-awareness within the service that is not fully replicated in the SEF, which should be redrafted as a priority.

6.6 It is recommended that this Corporate Board note the findings from the LGA Peer Review and agree for the recommendations to be taken forward.

## **7 Other options considered.**

No other options considered at this stage

## **8 Conclusion**

- 8.1 This report it to share with Snr Leaders the outcome of the LGA Peer Review which took place in January.
- 8.2 There are many positives within this, and it demonstrates the hard work which has taken place over the last 18 months to address practice issues, safeguarding children and build a service we can all be proud off.
- 8.3 There is still work to do, we know what this is and what we need to do to achieve it, the timescales are urgent as we are anticipating our next inspection soon.
- 8.4 This briefing aims to ensure that Senior Leaders are informed and committed to providing

## **9 Appendices**

Appendix 1 – LGA Peer Review Slides

Appendix 2 – LGA Peer Review Feedback Letter

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### **Background Papers:**

None

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**Subject to Call-In:**

Yes: ☐ No: ☒

The item is due to be referred to Council for final approval. ☐

Delays in implementation could have serious financial implications for the Council. ☐

Delays in implementation could compromise the Council’s position. ☐

Considered or reviewed by Scrutiny Commission or associated Committees, Task Groups within preceding six months. ☐

Item is Urgent Key Decision ☐

Report is to note only ☐

**Wards affected:** N/A

**Officer details:**

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Job Title: Service Director

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**Document Control**

Document Ref:		Date Created:	
Version:		Date Modified:	
Author:			
Owning Service			

**Change History**

Version	Date	Description	Change ID
1			
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