I am pleased to be able to present to you the Greenwich Safeguarding Children Board Annual Report 2012-13.

As the new Independent Chair of the Board, I arrived late summer 2012 to find that Greenwich partner agencies faced many challenges. These included continued resource constraints and significant organisational changes. However, despite these difficulties, I have been struck by the resilience and commitment of partners to keeping our children and young people safe from harm.

We say goodbye and thank you to two important members of the GSCB: In April 2013 we said goodbye to Sue Irving one of our Lay Members who in the months she has been with the Board has provided robust critical challenge to safeguarding improvement, and we are soon to say goodbye to Dr. Jimmy Abraham, Designated Doctor, who led the development of practice forums for health professionals and chaired the Greenwich Health Safeguarding Professionals Network.

This Annual Report sets out the GSCB’s progress and achievements and also the priority areas that the GSCB will focus on in the coming year. As part of the framework, during the last year, Greenwich partner agencies experienced a number of external scrutiny and inspections of its services evaluating their impact on children, young people and families in the Royal Borough. These included inspections of Fostering Services, Youth Offending Services, a thematic inspection on Missing Children, and a 10 day inspection of Arrangements for Child Protection. In addition, the council invited external scrutiny through a Peer Review.

Each of these analyses provided valuable appraisals of Greenwich’s progress against many of its key multi-agency priorities and each positively validated the direction of travel and improvement. In particular, the Peer Review and the GSCB Development Day in November 2012 saw pivotal changes to the GSCB in responding to existing and future challenges. A new GSCB structure has been in place since 1st January 2013, together with new or revised thematic Work Groups. The effectiveness of the GSCB was commented on in the December 2012 Ofsted Inspection for which the council and its partners were judged “Good”. The Inspection also commended partners’ commitment to safeguarding children and was positive about our plans for transition and development.

In recent months, new arrangements for health commissioning through Clinical Commissioning Groups have been established and organisational changes for the police leading to the introduction of Police Commissioners set out different strategic partnership developments and demands for the Greenwich SCB. These together with Munro’s Review of Child Protection and new requirements contained within the long awaited Working Together 2013 guidance, present new challenges for the GSCB and all partners. We are also determined to ensure that children and young people inform our work. Our new strategic priorities reflect these changes.

Identifying and responding earlier to the needs of vulnerable families has been of high importance in Greenwich and I have...
noted the significant increase in the use of the Team Around the Child (TAC) by schools and health professionals since the introduction of the “early help” inbox in September 2012 that has enabled improved information sharing between professionals. In addition, statutory partners and the voluntary and community sector have focused on Domestic Violence as their top priority with a new strategic plan. The GSCB supported this by hosting a heavily over-subscribed “Toxic Trio” conference in February, the first annual GSCB event. These initiatives give me additional confidence in the strong partnership approach of working together in the Royal Borough.

Nevertheless, it has been a demanding year in Greenwich, despite a reduction in contacts and referrals to children’s social care (due to the improving effectiveness of early help support), the borough has seen an increase in the number of core assessments with a steady rise in the number of children subject to child protection plans. Resources for all partners continue to be stretched: a feature noted in previous annual reports. It is absolutely essential that the available resources are used effectively and efficiently to meet our safeguarding responsibilities and priorities. That is why I am committed to promoting child protection as a top priority through my annual challenge meetings, the new GSCB quality assurance framework and by my representation on a number of strategic partnerships, including the Children’s Trust Board and the Community Safety Partnership.

The work of the board has revolved around the Strategic Priorities set for 2012-2013 which are highlighted in the following section. This report addresses how the partnership has responded to these priorities throughout the year.

To close, I would like to thank everyone from front line practitioners to senior managers for their hard work and dedication.

Kay Bell, GSCB Independent Chair
April 2013
The Greenwich Safeguarding Children Board (GSCB)
The GSCB is the statutory inter agency mechanism for agreeing how the different services and professional groups should co-operate to safeguard and promote the welfare of all children in Greenwich and to hold each other to account, ensuring that safeguarding children remains high on each partner agency’s agenda (Children Act 2004). The GSCB was established in 2006 and Kay Bell, became the Independent Chair (i.e. not an employee of any of the organisations working in Greenwich) of the GSCB in August 2012.

Local Safeguarding Children’s Boards are required to report annually on the effectiveness of safeguarding in the borough.

The LGA Peer Review took place in September 2012 which led the Board to examine its own performance and effectiveness, leading to a review of governance and priorities.

In line with the proposals for Working Together, the Board is now becoming more quality led, rather than policy led, with the voice of Children and Young People, Families and Service users at the heart of its work.

Informed by the LGA Peer Review, partner agency consultation and the outcomes of external inspections, the GSCB’s Priorities for 2013-2014 include:

1. The GSCB will be effective and strong with an efficient structure, focused priorities, meaningful member contribution and a robust risk management model

2. The GSCB ensures operational effectiveness of local safeguarding children partner agencies in respect of:
   - Early Help (statutory and non statutory service provision)
   - Child Protection (CP processes, plans, etc)
   - Looked After Children (timely permanence for children)

3. Quality Assurance arrangements are robust and provide system wide leadership of safeguarding across the whole partnership

4. Communication and engagement with Children, Young People, Parents, Carers, Volunteers and Professionals throughout the network effectively ensures that the voice of the child influences and underpins the work of the Strategic Partnership

5. The GSCB Partnership is used to drive transformation and strengthen multi-agency working to reduce harm and abuse in relation to Domestic Violence, Mental Health and Substance misusing parents
Governance
The GSCB consists of senior representatives from its member agencies as required by legislation (Section 13 Children Act 2004). There are robust governance and cross representation arrangements in place across other strategic partnership boards.

External Inspections
In the last year Greenwich has been subject to a number of external inspections which included Ofsted and the Home Office. Overall, the findings were positive and in many ways, the external scrutiny provided validation for the overall direction of travel and progress across partner agencies.

What does the Annual Report include?
This report sets out a summary of the work and activities of the GSCB and partner agencies for 2012-13.

The full report documents the LSCB’s assessment of its work to fulfil its strategic priorities of 2012-2013 and the difference safeguarding activity has made to children and families in the borough. The key highlights are summarised below:

Strategic Priorities 2012-2013

1. Implement the revised Working Together statutory guidance
The revised Working Together was not published in this year however, the revised structure and function of the Board has been created in line with the draft document. Work will be undertaken in the upcoming year to implement any changes and address any gaps.

2. GSCB effectively undertakes its Quality Assurance functions to benchmark performance facilitate improvement and promote accountability.
This year the GSCB appointed a Quality Assurance Officer and developed a comprehensive Quality Assurance Framework.

Performance information, primarily taken from Children’s Social Care, highlights the rise in the number of Children receiving early help, as well as a reduction in contact and referral activity. Despite this progress the partnership has been challenged by the increase of children made subject of an initial and subsequent Child Protection Plan as well as a rise in children subject of a Plan for longer than two years.

Quality Assurance activity of the Board has included examining the effectiveness of core group meetings as well as getting the views of children and young people, parents, carers and professionals.

3. GSCB to monitor the impact of early help to vulnerable children and families including looking at their journey through services to identify when problems emerge.
Ofsted’s unannounced inspection of Local Authority arrangements for the protection of Children during December 2012, judged the effectiveness of help and protection as “good” with evidence of some good and improved outcomes for children.

The Board has noted that there has been a significant increase of children and young people receiving early help evidenced by the increasing use of CAF’S and TAC’s by school and health professionals. Earlier help, targeting and support has helped to reduce referrals going to children’s social care, which shows that thresholds are being applied correctly. Thus, those who really require statutory intervention are receiving the appropriate service and resources are being applied more effectively and efficiently.

In order to look at their experiences of statutory intervention, the Quality Assurance Activity of the Board asked children about their experiences of Child Protection Conferences. The learning for the network is that clearer explanations of this process needs to be provided to children and their views need to be better represented.

Work to address the issues of children going missing and being at risk of sexual
exploitation was also a focus of partner organisations. This has resulted in a reduction in the number of Looked After Children going missing as well as an increase in early identification and service provision for children at risk of sexual exploitation.

4. Action to address Violence Against Women and Girls is prioritised and monitored through work groups, particularly in relation to:
   - Domestic Violence (DV)
   - Sexual Exploitation
   - Female Genital Mutilation (FGM)

The Board has keenly noticed the higher priority that DV has taken across the council, statutory and the voluntary sector. There is now a revised multi-agency strategic plan in place and the MARAC process continues to be robust. The Board raised awareness of these issues by bringing debates about topics related to “healthy relationships” to year 6 students throughout the Borough through Junior Citizenship as well as by hosting an oversubscribed “Toxic Trio” conference focusing on DV, Mental Health, and Substance misuse. In addition, the GSCB Health and Schools Safeguarding Networks focused on FGM with a revision of procedures, a pilot project in schools and a professionals and volunteers conference.

5. GSCB will monitor the response to children at risk of harm in specific circumstances including:
   - Children and young people living in private fostering arrangements
   - Children who go missing from home or care

Throughout the year the GSCB undertook activity to address the low numbers of children identified as being Privately Fostered. This included a multi agency campaign to raise awareness with professionals and carers of legal obligations and procedures as well as an overview of timeliness of visits to children subject to private fostering arrangements. Identification and reporting rates continue to be low and will be an ongoing piece of work for the partnership to undertake.

In regards to Children who go missing, the Joint Commissioning Group developed a better understanding including risks and how to effectively intervene resulting in a reduction in Children missing from care. Further work is required to address the increasing amounts of Children going missing from home.

Other Work of the Board is highlighted throughout the full report including keeping children safe in organisations, learning from Serious Case Reviews and the Child Death Overview Panel as well as training and development activity.

Making a Difference to Children & Young People in Greenwich: Partner Agencies

Each Partner Agency has provided an overview of what their responsibilities are in relation to safeguarding children as well as evidence around what difference they have made for children and how they have made a difference. There are numerous examples of effective practice including work of the Police to provide an effective response to young missing persons associated with gangs and Housing’s targeted work to support young people in housing need.

For more information on the work of the GSCB, please visit:
www.greenwichsafeguardingchildren.org.uk