

**MINUTES OF THE CHILDREN'S SAFEGUARDING POLICY AND PRACTICE ADVISORY COMMITTEE
THURSDAY, 22 NOVEMBER 2012**

Councillors Adamou, Allison, Corrick and Stewart

Apologies Councillor Scott and Councillor Bull

Also Present: Libby Blake, Marion Wheeler, Lisa Blundell, Chrissy Austin

MINUTE NO.	SUBJECT/DECISION	ACTON BY
TEX96.	<p>APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE</p> <p>Apologies for absence were received from Councillor Scott, and Councillor Bull.</p>	
TEX97.	<p>URGENT BUSINESS</p> <p>There were no items of urgent business to consider.</p>	
TEX98.	<p>DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST</p> <p>There were no declarations of interest put forward.</p>	
TEX99.	<p>MINUTES</p> <p>The minutes of the 17th September 2012 were agreed as an accurate record of the meeting.</p> <p>The minutes of the joint meeting with Corporate Parenting Advisory Committee were agreed as an accurate record of the meeting.</p> <p>It was noted that a report on children missing from care was due to be considered at the Corporate Parenting meeting on the 04th December 2012.</p>	
TEX100.	<p>MATTERS ARISING</p> <p>Agreed that the meeting on the 10th January be cancelled and members of the Committee be consulted on a new proposed date for the meeting, Monday 28th January 2013 7.30pm.</p> <p>It was agreed that a performance report for the January meeting was not required as this would be considered in March.</p> <p>Agreed that a report on the interface between safeguarding and other key partner agencies which provides an understanding of their communication lines was not required as this would be covered in the report back on the operation of the MASH.</p> <p>It was agreed that a short report be compiled for the next ordinary full council meeting providing an understanding of the areas of work looked</p>	<p>Clerk</p> <p>MW</p> <p>Clerk</p> <p>Clerk</p>

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	<p>at by the Committee over the year. Agreed that it would also include information on how matters raised by members of the Committee have been taken forward.</p>	
<p>TEX101.</p>	<p>PERFORMANCE ASSESSMENT - YEAR TO OCTOBER 2012 INCORPORATING UPDATED COMPARATIVE DATA FOR 2011/12</p> <p>The Committee considered performance data and trends relating to contacts, referrals assessments and child protection from the start of the year up to October.</p> <p>OP410 (Number of referrals to Children's Social Care) The reduced number of referrals to social care continues to demonstrate that robust screening of contacts is effective and that the social care thresholds are being correctly applied. Contacts that did not require a social work intervention were signposted appropriately. The Committee were reminded that Haringey were one of only two boroughs in the country to currently operate the MASH (Multi Agency Safeguarding Hub) and more local authorities were looking to implement this model.</p> <p>Comment was made on the high proportion of Initial Assessments being completed and it was noted that in Haringey more children will go on to receive an Initial Assessment, following referral to social care, than statistical neighbouring boroughs. This was associated with the current intensive approach, also illustrated in the later audit, that all referrals, even those with a low risk, require an Initial Assessment to be completed. The Committee were advised that once the focus of the Children's service adapts towards early intervention and preventative services there will be less of a need to complete Initial Assessments automatically for all referrals. For example, families where domestic violence or housing is the underlying issue to their referral, can be referred to other agencies such as HARTS, Hearthstone who can work with them without the need for the more authoritarian intervention of social care.</p> <p>The Committee continued to discuss the reasons for the number of Initial Assessments requiring completion and queried whether the Children's service were working to a lower threshold of need, when assessing referrals, compared to other local authorities. It was further observed that once referrals were made to social care, they usually progressed to the more expensive end of services. The Director for Children's Services advised the Committee that the Safeguarding and Support service would benefit from an external look at the how the thresholds of need were being applied. The Committee agreed that it would be useful for the independent member to examine the application of the threshold of need specifically when auditing a sample of new referrals to Safeguarding services in January. These findings could be considered at</p>	

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	<p>the next meeting.</p> <p>Although the performance on the completion of Initial Assessments and Core Assessments was below the set target, there had been a significant improvement in the completion rate of Core Assessments in October to bring the figure up from 58% to 80%. The Director for Children's services commended the Assistant Director for setting inspirational targets for completion of Initial and Core assessments and managing the significant effort to come close to reaching these targets.</p> <p>There was discussion about the undeniable link between deprivation and the number of children in need in the borough. However, the borough was not the most deprived in the country and the service would continue to explore ,with partners, how they work with families as once a child/young person enters the social care system, due to the authoritative actions that need to be taken, matters escalate more quickly, meaning that access to more expensive services is required. For example, this can mean examining if there are any inherent issues in the child care system that need to be changed, i.e. are cases progressed too quickly to child protection plans, are Child Protection Conference Chair's too cautious . Overall there is a need to address a combination of issues and look at how processes can work with the family whilst keeping the child/young person's safety as a priority.</p>	<p>HC</p>
<p>TEX102.</p>	<p>VISITS TO CHILDREN SUBJECT TO CHILD PROTECTION PLANS</p> <p>The Committee had previously expressed concern about the recording of visits made to children on child protection plans and the Head of Quality Assurance had undertaken an internal audit to provide further assurance about the frequency of visits and to check that recording was to the appropriate standard.</p> <p>The Committee noted that, at the end of September 2012, there were 326 children subject to plans with 92.6% of visits recorded as having taken place within the month. The audit had covered child protection visits undertaken by the Disabled Children's Team, Safeguarding and Support, First Response and the Court team. Immediate concern was expressed by the Committee at the percentage of visits, assigned to the Disabled Children's' Team, that had taken place within timescale as these were lower in comparison to the other four teams. It was envisaged that this could be due to a number of factors at work such as the family not being home at the time of the visit and the new arranged visit being out of timescale. It was noted that the number of disabled children requiring visits would be quite low. The Assistant Director agreed to speak with the Head of Special Needs, to compile a note for the Committee which will clarify the number of Child protection cases,</p>	<p>MW/PD</p>

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	<p>frequency of visits, whether any were part of a sibling group, and the changes to be implemented to strengthen the team's focus on completing visits within timescales. The Committee noted that all the teams responsible for Child Protection Plans would be moving towards bi monthly Child Protection visits in line with Pan London Arrangements. This would have an impact on the performance figures as if a mid month visit was not successful a second visit would already be scheduled.</p> <p>There was discussion about the template used to record a child protection visit. The merits of the template were that it supported less experienced social workers to undertake the necessary observations about a child's/ young person's environment and prompted required questions to the care giver. However, there was also a further professional balance to strike and understand the necessary observations that needed to be made in a particular case and those issues listed on the template which would not be applicable. More experienced social workers were able to judge this and add additional pertinent information to the template which may not be assigned a heading. These issues would be looked at when amending the template.</p> <p>The adoption of the new MOSAIC IT programme will allow Social Workers to complete family records and complete single assessments. The report recommended that further thought should be given to how individual children in a family are seen alone so that the voice of all the children can be heard. This would be taken forward in the compilation of the template and single assessment.</p> <p>It was clarified that the timescale for amending the template would be 6-8 weeks.</p>	
TEX103.	<p>ANY OTHER BUSINESS</p> <p>There were no additional items of business.</p>	
TEX104.	<p>EXCLUSION OF THE PRESS AND PUBLIC</p> <p>The press and public were excluded from the meeting for consideration of the following item as it contained exempt information as defined in section 100a of the local government act 1972 (as amended by section 12A of the local government act 1985) paragraphs 1&2 namely information relating to an individual and information likely to reveal the identity of an individual.</p>	
TEX105.	<p>OUT OF TIME ASSESSMENTS</p> <p>When considering the performance figures, at the July Committee meeting, concern was expressed that both Initial and Core Assessments</p>	

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	<p>were not being completed within the locally agreed timescales. The Committee had asked the independent member to undertake an audit which would explore the length of the delays, reason for delays and if there was any impact on the vulnerable child's wellbeing and safety. A sample of cases was audited on the 20th September and these were spread across a number of children's service teams. The Committee were given assurance that there were no cases seen where a delay in the Initial Assessment completion caused concern for the safety or wellbeing of the child. Essentially, children were seen in an appropriate timescale even though the assessment was not completed within timescale. Also the independent member had seen evidence of good management oversight and supervision.</p> <p>The process followed by the social workers was set and usually meant that a referral led to an Initial Assessment, to strategy discussion, to Core Assessment to Initial Child Protection conference. The Committee noted that the system followed by the council as well as by other local authorities meant that many Initial Assessments are opened in order to proceed to a strategy meeting. This will allow the social worker to have a wider discussion on the referral with relevant agencies, schools, and other support workers.</p> <p>The systems in place are also there to meet the requirements of child protection procedures and children in need census, the DFE's reporting tool. Therefore the system will register an error if a referral is not followed by an Initial Assessment. As a result of this, the Independent Member found some unclosed Initial Assessments and this contributed to the difficulty in meeting the Initial Assessment completion target. The Independent Member also found that the completion of an Initial assessment seemed to be the automatic response when receiving a referral even when the case was assessed as low risk. So there was a tension between meeting reporting requirements and supporting good practice.</p> <p>Overall, the independent member had found that it was mainly system and process errors that contributed to the Initial Assessment targets not being met. The Committee were asked by the independent member to support the proactive implementation of MOSAIC and the single assessment process, with continuing focus on good practice of systems instead of systems and reporting led solutions.</p> <p>The Committee agreed to monitor the MOSAIC programme implementation in 2013 so that the required change process did not impact unduly on the performance of the safeguarding service and its social care of children and young people.</p> <p>It was also agreed that officers explore a differentiated response to referrals of domestic violence as these cases always involved the completion of an Initial Assessment.</p>	<p>All to note</p> <p>MW</p>
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<p>TEX106.</p>	<p>CASES THAT MEET SAFEGUARDING (SECTION 47) THRESHOLD BUT DO NOT PROGRESS TO CHILD PROTECTION CONFERENCE</p> <p>The Acting Head of First Response provided the Committee with a verbal update on her internal investigations into cases that met the safeguarding section 47) threshold but did not progress to child protection conference.</p> <p>It was explained that where a child is suspected to be suffering, or likely to suffer, significant harm, the local authority is required under s47 of the Children Act 1989 to make enquiries, to enable it to decide whether it should take any action to safeguard and promote the welfare of the child. The council usually undertake this investigation with the consent and co-operation of the Police but can begin investigations without this if necessary. It was estimated that the Children's service will have 10-15 section 47 investigations to complete per week. On hearing this, the Committee requested further information on the actual number of section 47's (child protection investigations) completed in comparisons to statistical neighbouring boroughs.</p>	<p>CA</p>
<p>TEX107.</p>	<p>EXEMPT ITEMS OF URGENT BUSINESS</p> <p>There were no items of urgent business.</p>	

Cllr James Stewart

Chair