

**MINUTES OF THE CHILDREN'S SAFEGUARDING POLICY AND PRACTICE ADVISORY COMMITTEE
TUESDAY, 17 SEPTEMBER 2013**

Councillors Browne, Corrick, Hare, Scott and Stewart (Chair)

Apologies Councillor Adamou

Also Present: Marion Wheeler, Lisa Blundell, Chrissy Austin, Beverley Tarka, Sue Southgate, Rachel Oakley.

MINUTE NO.	SUBJECT/DECISION	ACTON BY
TEX162.	APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE Apologies for absence were received from Cllr Adamou and Libby Blake.	
TEX163.	URGENT BUSINESS No items of urgent business were received.	
TEX164.	DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST No declarations of interest were put forward.	
TEX165.	MINUTES The minutes of the meeting, held on the 02 July 2013, were approved as an accurate record of the meeting. In response to a suggestion to look at age profiling of children subject to a child protection plan, it was noted that this was explored further in agenda items 6 and 7. In answer to a suggestion to exploring the Adoptions which are subject to challenge and looking at adoption from a child's perspective, the percentage range of adoption made in comparison to the number of children in care was referred to. There was guidance and research available on the outcomes for children that are adopted which could also be sent to Cllr Hare.	Clerk
TEX166.	MATTERS ARISING The Committee noted the items for the joint meeting with Corporate Parenting on the 05 November and had no further items were added to the Committee agenda.	Clerk
TEX167.	PERFORMANCE ASSESSMENT - QUARTER 1 2013/14	

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	<p>The Committee considered performance data and trends for an agreed set of measures relating to: Children and Families - contacts, referrals and assessments and child protection. The following key information was noted:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Steady decline in the number of looked after children • Reduction in the number of contacts being received by the First Response Team • Re-referrals stood at 12% against a target of 16% - this was a positive indication of quality initial contact with families, leading to a low number of re – referrals. <p>The Committee noted that this was the final occasion for considering performance on initial and core assessments as the new single assessment process had now started. Members noted that, under this new assessment process, there is a requirement for the child to be seen within 10 days with a decision also needing to be made about what sort of assessment (Simple or complex) within this timeline. The performance target figure for the single assessment would be 95%. The Committee noted a Complex Assessment would need to be completed in 45 days. This process would be aided by a new referral template which is focused on analysis and reflection.</p> <p>Understanding was sought on the thinking behind the choice of days to complete single assessments and it was noted that the number of days (10) was chosen in consultation with other boroughs. The Committee were keen to maintain their understanding of the service’s performance in taking forward an initial assessment of a case and whether this was good or not. They questioned how this could now be done. In response, it was noted that there was scope to compare the single assessment figures to how many children were seen within 10 days in previous months and years and this could be included in future reports.</p> <p>Understanding was sought on how the Committee could get a better knowledge of outcomes for children from looking at performance information. It was explained that the performance figures provided a comprehension of the impact of the service’s work and initiatives for the care of children. A performance figure which provided a clear stark example of this, was the number of children who that had been on a plan for longer than 2 years. This provides an indication if outcomes for the child are being achieved. The service routinely examines the length of time a child was on a plan in comparison to their age to understand if outcomes were likely to be achieved. All cases were different: a young person may need the security of being of a CP plan because of the high level monitoring involved but a young child should not be on a plan for a long period, especially as failure to achieve good enough parenting has an impact on their developmental needs if the outcomes are not being met. As a way of developing understanding about the outcomes being delivered for a child, it was agreed for a sample of child protection</p>	<p>MG</p> <p>HC</p>
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	<p>plans to be looked at and outcomes followed up by the Independent Member</p> <p>The rate of decline in the number of children that were becoming subject to plan, together with the number of children coming off plan was compared and discussed. This was attributed to the impact of the Safeguarding and Support team beginning to work with the family at the point of the Initial Child Protection Conference instead of starting the work after the initial assessment stage. There was a real sense of momentum in taking this early contact work with the family forward as soon as possible. The service was also reviewing CP plans for children that have been on them for more than 15 months and ensuring that actions were being followed up and there was continual assessment of plans of whether further action was needed. This action coupled with fewer children coming onto plan impacted on the figures.</p> <p>The service were also aware that more visits to children on plans helped speed up the process and work to a plan so this was being instigated along with an improved focus on analysis.</p> <p>Agreed that it would still be prudent for the Committee to monitor this performance figure but it was likely that this performance figure would eventually plateau. The Head of Safeguarding and Support would also continue to monitor the thresholds in place for placing a child on a plan and how they were being applied.</p>	<p>All to note</p>
<p>TEX168.</p>	<p>CHILD PROTECTION ADVISORS ANNUAL REPORT</p> <p>This was the first report to the Children's Safeguarding and Policy Committee directly from the Child Protection Advisors and it provided some detail about their role. They will facilitate critical decisions about the care of a child on a protection plan. They offer advice to all agencies at conference meetings and outside meetings, meet with parents of children on plan and they will also ensure that there is advocacy for the child in the conference meeting to make sure their voices are heard. Further work was also being taken forward on better inclusion of fathers in the conference process.</p> <p>Within the council, the child protection advisors will make a leading contribution to the quality assurance, work alongside operational managers to raise performance standards, support the work of the LSCB by contributing to policy initiatives, complete training for agencies in the sub groups in the LSCB.</p> <p>Child Protection Advisors' views are sought on the Child Protection process and they will have a clear view on where the outcomes are for a child and whether they are being achieved.</p> <p>There is feedback sought on the Child Protection process from parents and there is a commitment to work together and provide an integrated</p>	

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response to children and families. The Child Protection Advisors seek to capture parents thinking and help them to feel involved with the process.

The Committee were provided with information about the daily work of a CPA in chairing conferences and escalating matters when needed. The minutes and plan of action are compiled within 24 hours of a meeting and there is a 95% target on achieving this.

The Committee noted that Joint working between Safeguarding and Support and CPA's has lead to a reduction in the number of children that have been on plans for between 12-18 months.

In response to a question, it was clarified that pre birth conferences can be taken forward from the first trimester. This meeting could involve Mental Health, Midwifery and other agencies involved with the mother. The Committee were provided with an understanding of the factors involved in a pre birth referral.

The Committee were pleased to note that Advocacy support was being commissioned to help ensure that the voice of the child/ young person is available at the child protection conference meeting.

TEX169. CYPS - MULTI-AGENCY SAFEGUARDING HUB (MASH)

Following on from the Judicial Review and findings against the council in respect of information sharing, The Director of Children's Services had requested the Council's Internal Auditors, Deloitte and Touche Public Sector Internal Audit Limited conduct an exercise to provide assurance on data and information compliance, compliance with local and statutory requirements, and records management within the Service. Tests were carried out on a number of documents and policies to understand if they were up to date and were compliant with policy and legislative requirement for information sharing between partners. .There was also an audit completed on a sample of 10 cases to assess decision making recording against threshold and how they were progressed to a section 47 investigation.

Committee Members considered the list of documents and protocols that were checked, audit action plan and management action plan arising from the findings of the audit.

The Committee asked the Acting Head of First Response about how confident the team were with implementing and following the legal requirements around the sharing of information. The Committee noted that there was more confidence in the team following the added training and guidance received on information sharing. Members noted that it would be an ongoing conversation with staff to continually ensure that the requirements behind the information sharing protocols were well understood and adhered to.

The Chair reiterated the importance of following the legal requirements

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of the information sharing and continually managing risks in relation to keeping children safe. The Chair was assured that there was an improvement in recording and social workers and supervising managers were recording reasons behind their actions. For example, where consent to share information could not be obtained and the information held indicated there was a necessity to act in the overall safety of the child. The Committee continued to note that there was a stronger sense of the information sharing rules within the service and there was a sense of ownership for the information being given by partners.

The Chair enquired about the work with partners and ensuring they had an understanding about what their responsibilities were as part of the protocols for information sharing. It was noted that workshops had been held with children's centre staff so they knew the types of information they needed to share.

More understanding was sought on the nature of the term 'significant harm' and the circumstances to trigger a section 47 investigation. It was explained that this could involve a range of circumstances such as physical abuse, emotional harm or risk of sexual abuse. Social workers, practitioners and managers would need to assess risk, impact, and consequence. This would mean asking questions and gathering information to enable this understanding to be reached. Committee Members noted that this was a continuing analytical process, recording and being aware of serious case reviews findings, research, social work experience, all contributing to the final judgement of the social worker. It was commented that how this judgement is reached depends on the quality of information at hand and the information given by partners and how the contact with the family is recorded. Given this, it was agreed for the Independent Member of the Committee to take forward a qualitative case audit, focused on recording around decision making. It was agreed that the audit of cases will be for the week beginning the 16th September and reported back to the next meeting in January.

HC

The Assistant Director for Children and Young People's service commended the Acting Head of First Response for continuing to manage the busy daily work of the First Response service together with managing the changes to working practices following on from the judgement. The Assistant Director felt that the First Response team were continuing to keep the balance between the statutory obligations attached to information sharing and making sure that children were safeguarded. In response to a question about the key components to taking forward a contact correctly, this was about continually keeping an open mind about the nature of the information received, having the training and experience to judge the information at hand. This could be achieved by ensuring that Haringey has high quality and experienced staff working in the First Response team supported by well trained and experienced managers.

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<p>TEX170.</p>	<p>UPDATE ON REVIEW OF MASH DOCUMENTS</p> <p>At the last meeting in July, the Committee had considered a report containing legal advice on information sharing and they had subsequently agreed to consider a further progress report on the revision of relevant documents and guidance concerning information sharing which is in use by the council and LSCB.</p> <p>The action required following the advice was to: a) review the MASH documentation and ensure they adequately address the issue of consent and take into account the Working Together to Safeguard Children (2013) statutory guidance; b) ensure that the revised and improved documents are approved by the appropriate Committee or body; c) prepare an easy guide for the public on the MASH information sharing arrangement; and d) ensure that relevant staff are fully aware of and trained on any new or revised information sharing documents.</p> <p>MASH documents were produced by the London MASH Project under the London Safeguarding Children Board. These documents have been discussed, negotiated and approved for use by local authorities with the MASH arrangement. However, these documents had been slightly adjusted to ensure they also respond to local concerns. This was set out in paragraph 6 of the 'Working Together Guidance'.</p> <p>Committee Members were directed to the relevant sections in the information sharing agreement (appendix 1) where there was added explanation about consent and when to share information. Committee Members were shown where there was guidance added on the importance of recording around decision making.</p> <p>Having considered the enclosed MASH documentation, and booklet for practioners, it was remarked that this was quite detailed and dense information for social workers and practitioners to assimilate. Clarification was sought about the ongoing support to ensure that the information sharing advice and guidance was continually understood and adhered to. The Committee were assured that there had been workshops on this guidance with reference given to the key areas of the guidance that needed to be refereed to. There was also the MASH flow chart attached at appendix 3 which could be referred to as a quick guide and the 7 legal golden rules of information sharing. Legal services and First Response would keep collaborating to ensure that there was a balance between risk and the legal requirements of information sharing.</p> <p>The judgement had demonstrated the need to focus on compliance of statutory and legal requirements for information sharing and the continual need to ensure this understanding was reflected in day to day practice.</p>	
<p>TEX171.</p>	<p>REFERRALS FROM CHILDREN'S TO ADULT AND COMMUNITY SERVICES</p>	

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At the Committee meeting in April, Members had considered an audit concerning cases that had been referred to the Adults through the SOVA (Safeguarding of Vulnerable Adults) referral process. This audit sample did not encompass clients that were the responsibility of Adults with Learning Difficulties, Drugs Alcohol Action team; Adults with Physical Disabilities and Adults service were further asked to complete a sample audit which included some of these service areas. The Committee noted that there were a total of 24 referrals sampled from Children's services to Adult services for the period of 01 April 2012 to 31st March 2013. The Committee questioned the formula applied to the selection of the samples and it was noted that cases were chosen at random with the total number looked at estimated to be a quarter of the referrals received. Committee Members continued to consider the findings of the case file audit which was attached to the exempt part of the agenda. This included the date of the referral from Children's services to Adult services and the actions that had been taken in relation to providing a service and the outcome delivered. The Acting Director of Adults services highlighted that there were 5 episodes that were created on the system in error, these were abandoned as the adult in question was likely to already be receiving a service and was known to the Adults service and therefore will already have a FWI file. The security attached around the Framework I system meant that episodes could not be deleted without a managers agreement.

The Committee were informed that the audits completed by the Adults Services will feed into the councils' internal Quality Assurance Board and will be considered at call over reviews. This will allow findings to be assessed and to understand how working practices can be improved.

Although both Adults Services and Children's services use Framework I to record episodes on case files, Adults services are not able to access children's episodes. The Committee were informed that the Framework I systems permissions were set to be revised, by October this year, to allow access to the children's episodes by Adult services. This would help improve access and analysis and joint working.

The Chair asked the Assistant Director to comment on the transition process between Adults and Children's services. It was noted that the only issue identified was concerning the alignment between Adult services and Children's services on Framework I which was to be resolved.

In response to a concern about the number of cases abandoned in error, this was attributed to data cleansing and did not reflect that the case had simply been discontinued. It was further explained that in some cases the clients name had been mis-spelt and this meant that a new case had to be created with the right name to avoid any confusion and potential duplication. In terms of data gathering for performance information, the Committee were assured that there is an awareness of duplication on FWI and this duplicated information was able to be filtered out when collating data for performance information.

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	<p>Clarification was sought on the distinction between an Adult referral only and Adult referral with a child involved as the original premise for the referral from the Children's services to Adult services indicates that a child is involved? It was explained that in the case of an Adult referral, it was likely the case that the child was already receiving a service from the Children's service and the parent also required support from Adults services. The Independent Member reminded Members about the original focus of the audit which was to ensure that children will not be in a vulnerable position if their parents are receiving specialists type services from Adult Services. In response, it was further clarified that the Adults only referral will entail support to the Adults but members were assured that this does not preclude the fact that Children's service will have gone out and worked with the family, in terms of the care for the child.</p> <p>The Committee noted that the files concerning substance misuse were held by partner agencies and there were particular permissions to be sought to obtain access to these files .The Independent Member would liaise with Children's services and Public Health partners on an appropriate date to conduct the audit.</p> <p>The Committee noted that a parent can seek, independently, support for a drug or alcohol addiction and therefore not be known to Children's services. In this case, the responsibility would be on the adults drug or alcohol service provider , to undertake an assessment of risk and impact and make a decision about whether to refer the family to Children's services. This can be with or without the consent of the adult/ parent dependent upon the level of concern and risk.</p>	HC
TEX172.	NEW ITEMS OF URGENT BUSINESS None	
TEX173.	EXCLUSION OF THE PRESS AND PUBLIC	
TEX174.	REFERRALS FROM CHILDREN'S TO ADULT AND COMMUNITY SERVICES As per item 13.	
TEX175.	EXEMPT MINUTES 02 JULY 2013 Agreed as an accurate record.	
TEX176.	NEW ITEMS OF EXEMPT URGENT BUSINESS None	
TEX177.	ANY OTHER BUSINESS	

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Cllr James Stewart

Chair