

**Meeting:** Haringey Strategic Partnership

**Date:** 26 February 2009

**Report Title:** Action Plan in Response to the Joint Area Review of Safeguarding in Haringey

**Report of:** Peter Lewis, Director, the Children and Young People's Service

### **Purpose**

To inform Haringey Strategic Partnership of the Action Plan in response to the Joint Area Review of Safeguarding in Haringey

### **Summary**

In the Joint Area Review (JAR) Report from December 2008, OFSTED makes a number of recommendations for improvement of safeguarding services in Haringey. The Secretary of State for CSF subsequently (1 December 2008) asked "the Director of Children's Service appointed from January 2009 to send me an action plan responding to [the OFSTED] report by the end of February 2009".

The attached plan is that response – and more. As well as responding to the specific points identified by OFSTED, the plan sets out the framework for a journey that will take three years as we progress from 'Inadequate', to 'Satisfactory' and on to be at least 'Good' if not 'Excellent'. Everyone working for children across the Borough has come together for this work with commitment, enthusiasm and a determination to deliver excellent services for children.

The Project Group that met during late December through to February has reviewed the full range of work to be done by an excellent Children's Service. In doing so, areas for change and improvement have been mapped out together with a series of actions that will deliver those improvements with outcomes clearly described.

Seven Themes emerged from the work:

- Leadership and Partnership
- Working Practices
- Getting the Organisation Right
- Early Intervention / Universal Services
- Commissioning
- Delivering success through people

- Monitoring the performance and the quality of safeguarding practice

This report summarises the action planned under each of these themes. The full action plan is attached as Appendix 2. Please note that the version of the action plan submitted with this report is the same version as that submitted for the Cabinet meeting on 24 February. It does not include any amendments made following the Overview and Scrutiny meeting of 17 February or the HSP PMG Special JAR meeting of 18 February as the submission deadline for this report is prior to these meetings taking place.

Each of these themes sets out particular areas for improvement that will support the move to an excellent Children's Service.

### **Financial Implications**

The financial plan to support this action plan is still under development at the time of writing. Discussions continue with the DCSF on any additional resources that will be made available to Haringey.

### **Recommendations**

That the HSP consider this report and the attached Action Plan.

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## **Background**

In the Joint Area Review (JAR) Report from December 2008, OFSTED makes a number of recommendations for improvement of safeguarding services in Haringey. The Secretary of State for CSF subsequently (1 December 2008) asked "the Director of Children's Service appointed from January 2009 to send me an action plan responding to [the OFSTED] report by the end of February 2009".

In anticipation of the Director's arrival, a multi-agency project board was formed in December, drawn from senior staff across the Children and Young People's Strategic Partnership's statutory agencies. The membership of this board is shown in Appendix 1. The plan set out in full in Appendix 2 is the outcome of intensive joint working. As planned, the process of producing the plan has itself contributed substantially to developing shared understanding and a renewed commitment to partnership working between the statutory agencies.

In the following paragraphs we summarise the main elements of the plan and what it will help us achieve.

## **Action Plan**

### **Leadership and Partnership**

Improvements to Leadership and Partnership will make safeguarding more explicitly a priority for Haringey Strategic Partnership (HSP). Although it always has been a priority, the changes proposed in this change programme will not only make that much clearer, it will provide mechanisms for the HSP to be actively involved in monitoring and managing the performance of those services who deliver safeguarding.

An early step in the change programme will be the creation of a Children's Trust. The existing Children's & Young People's Strategic Partnership Board (CYPSPB) will become a Children's Trust as required by the Children Act 2004. This change of status will helpfully reflect the renewed closer working between agencies and sectors in the Borough that has come about in the last 6 months as well as fulfilling our statutory obligations. Strong links will be forged between the work of the Children's Trust and the Community Strategy.

We will establish an Executive Performance Monitoring Group for the Children's Trust with a remit to ensure that targets are set and met by the Safeguarding services.

Work to improve partnership working and communication has already started. The Board that has come together to write and guide the change programme is evidence of a revitalised partnership across the agencies, with many examples of offers to work much more closely in multi-disciplinary teams being one manifestation of the commitment.

Changes to the Local Safeguarding Children's Board (LSCB) include appointing an independent Chair – already done. This confirms the capacity of the LSCB to act as a critical friend to Children's Services and undertake its own statutory role satisfactorily and independently.

Strengthened partnership working will ensure make sure that we write a strong Children's and Young People's Plan (CYPP) which is to be refreshed in 2009 to cover at least the next three years of our work together.

### **Working Practices**

The changes that we will make to working practices – processes and systems - will see much improvement in people's access to services. Agreement across the services about the consistent use of common referral systems together with more straightforward pathways will speed up how we deal with those referrals. We will be able to make decisions about whether or not assessment is needed more effectively – and we will tell referrers what happened much more consistently and quickly than we have been able to do thus far.

All partners have committed to a review of their processes to ensure effective sharing of information about children, as well as joint-training on all the core processes for assessment. Importantly, the thresholds for intervention are being revised and will be published widely across all agencies to improve understanding, particularly for those who refer large numbers and sometimes cannot see why a decision has been made. Telling people quickly what happened to the referral will also include some feedback on why the decision was made.

The revision to processes will ensure that things are dealt with speedily throughout a child's contact with the services. It will also bolster the robustness of our procedures by making sure there is better cross-checking between agencies when referrals are made. Backed by high quality training and development, these changes will build the confidence and competence of our professional staff, delivering the skills and capacity to deliver excellent safeguarding services.

### **Getting the Organisation Right**

Revising structures – getting the organisation right - alongside the changes to systems will also help make sure that we have the right people, in the right place and at the right time. It will also help make sure that those people have the right skills to do the job they're asked to. Less complicated pathways with fewer changes of social worker as children move through the system will bring greater consistency to the assessment process as well as improving the child's experience.

The improvements to working practices and new investment and support staff will free social workers to use their skills where they are most needed – working directly with families. This will go some way towards helping recruit permanent staff who will welcome this as an important support to their work.

### **Early Intervention / Universal Services**

Improving access to universal services and early interventions will reduce the number of children who come to need more targeted services later on – making overall caseload more manageable and providing better outcomes for those children and their families. More consistent monitoring of how well children respond to these interventions will help us to refine our work and make it more effective, in turn delivering better outcomes.

### **Commissioning**

To support the improvement in services we will improve our commissioning so that we get the best safeguarding, in the most effective manner while fulfilling our obligation to provide value for money. This will be helped by an increase in the shared working across the partners and bringing together previously separate budgets to be shared to greater effect. Forward planning the resource needs in the medium term will help all agencies to plan better and secure what is needed against a backdrop of volatile public finances.

### **Delivering success through people**

As performance improves and the services deliver better outcomes, recruitment of workers should also improve since high quality and high performance act as a magnet to the best qualified and best performing staff. This will, over time, tend to become the virtuous circle of improvement where success breeds success. As these higher standards are agreed across all agencies and become embedded, it becomes easier for all agencies to monitor and encourage performance improvement across the agencies developing a culture of aspiration and improvement.

In the plan we set out the immediate steps we will take across the partnership to develop a Haringey Offer to retain good staff and to attract good new staff. We also set out our plans to ensure high quality supervision and management across the agencies, working to shared values and standards, to raise performance and quality in all interventions with children and young people.

### **Monitoring the performance and the quality of safeguarding practice**

The whole plan is designed to produce better outcomes for children, the quality of which we must be able to recognise and measure so that our Performance is managed effectively – by ourselves and those to whom we report. The plan shows how will measure the quality of the work we do as well as the timeliness and quantity.

### **Immediate priorities**

Whilst our ambitions go beyond simply responding to the JAR report recommendations, there are still urgent matters to be addressed in that report. OFSTED will make a Monitoring Visit to Haringey in June 2009. To demonstrate the capacity to improve and show at least satisfactory progress, by June 2009 the final published plan will set out in detail what we will have achieved by the time of that monitoring visit.

Beyond June, we shall make the other changes in a planned and progressive way, matching the pace of change to the development of the services and securing both success and stability.

### **Appendices**

8.1 Appendix 1: JAR Action Plan Project Board members

8.2 Appendix 2: JAR Action Plan