



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

Signed :

Contact Officer : Ian Bailey, Deputy Director, Business Support and Development, CYPS

Wards(s) affected: **All**

Report for: **Key Decision**

1. Purpose of the Report

- 1.1. To enable the Cabinet to comment on the attached Action Plan prior to submission to the Secretary of State for Children, Schools and Families.

2. Introduction by Cabinet Member

- 2.1. This report is not just a response to a critical inspection. It is the first stage on Haringey's journey to becoming an exemplar authority for child protection. We have fully accepted the criticism of our safeguarding service and are equally fully committed to making all the changes necessary.
- 2.2. We are also well aware that successful safeguarding is only possible through good partnership working. This is why the involvement and joint work by all our partners in developing this action plan is as important as the content of the plan itself.



2.3. Together we aim to develop a culture which is open to learning and to challenge and where safeguarding is seen as everyone's responsibility.

3. State link(s) with Council Plan Priorities and actions and /or other Strategies:

3.1. The action plan will form an integral part of the revised Children and Young People's Plan. It will also be fully represented in CYPS business plans.

4. Recommendations

4.1 That the committee consider this report and the attached action plan.

5. Summary

5.1 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".

5.2 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 3 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.

5.3 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.

5.4 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 1.

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



6. Background

6.1 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”.

6.2 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.

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

6.4 Leadership and Partnership

6.4.1 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.

6.4.2 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.

6.4.3 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.

6.4.4 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.

6.4.5 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.

6.4.6 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 3 years of our work together.



6.5	Working Practices
6.5.1	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.
6.5.2	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.
6.5.3	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.
6.6	Getting the Organisation Right
6.6.1	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.
6.6.2	The improvements to working practices and new investment and support staff will free up 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.
6.7	Early Intervention / Universal Services
6.7.1	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
7.	Chief Financial Officer Comments
7.1	Members will recall that as part of the 2009-10 Pre-Business Plan Review Process (PBPR) certain savings attributable to CYPS were removed pending



the arrival of the Director of The Children and Young People's Service and his assessment of the resource requirements necessary to respond to the Joint Area Review inspection. The Action Plan represents the response to that requirement.

There is clearly a degree of uncertainty about the extent to which the Government will be prepared to support the authority although it would seem reasonable to assume that any support would be of a time limited nature and therefore only suitable to support one-off type expenditures. As a corollary any costs of an on-going nature must be sustainable within the constraints of the Councils budget setting processes whether met from existing or additional resources.

Whilst recognising that uncertainties are present in respect of the timing and cost of items within the plan it is necessary to be clear about the extent to which support in 2009-10 from the Council's resources is being requested so that Members can make informed decisions when determining the level of the Council Tax

8. Head of Legal Services Comments

- 8.1. The Head of Legal Services has been consulted on the content of this report and its Appendix. The development and implementation of the Action Plan will assist compliance with the duty on the Authority to safeguard and promote the welfare of children provided by Section 11 of the Children Act 2004. Section 10 of the 2004 Act requires the Authority to cooperate with all relevant partners to improve the well being of children. The implementation of a Children's Trust as outlined in the Action Plan will further develop the necessary inter-agency cooperation required to meet this duty.

9. Equalities &Community Cohesion Comments

- 9.1 The JAR Action Plan aims to positively improve the safeguarding of all of Haringey's children and young people.

10. Consultation

- 10.1 This plan has been informed by extensive staff consultation both within the council and across the partnership, discussion with trades unions and with the Haringey Youth Council. It has also been considered at the 17 February Overview and Scrutiny Committee.

11. Service Financial Comments

- 11.1 The attached action plan has potentially significant financial implications. The plan consists of a number of priority actions over the medium term that will need



to be funded from a number of sources. Additionally it should be specifically noted that the plan is a combination of revenue items, both one-off and recurring in nature, and items of a capital investment nature.

The source of funding for the plan is likely to be drawn from a combination of the following:

- Reprioritisation of existing CYPS resources;
- A bid for additional funding from the Department for Children Schools and Families (DCSF);
- The use of additional relevant grant funding streams e.g. Area Based Grant;
- A bid for additional resources from the Council.

Work is currently underway to establish the overall cost of implementing the Action Plan and its associated phasing over the timeframe set out for improvement

12. Use of Appendices /Tables and Photographs

- 12.1. Appendix 1 - Membership of Partnership Project Board
Appendix 2 - Action Plan in Response to the Joint Area Review of Safeguarding In Haringey

13. Local Government (Access to Information) Act 1985

- Annual Performance Assessment (December 2008)
- Joint Area Review – Review of Services for Children and Young People, with Particular reference to Safeguarding
- Letter from Secretary of State to Christine Gilbert (1.12.08)