

Agenda item:

[No.]

Cabinet

On 24 February 2009

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

Report of **Director of 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. This addendum updates Cabinet on the recommendations from the Overview and Scrutiny Committee meeting of 17 February 2009 and includes a proposed Cabinet response.

2. Recommendations

- 2.1. That Cabinet agree the proposed response set out in paragraph 4.3.

3. Background

- 4.1 Overview and Scrutiny Committee met on the evening of 17 February 2009 and questioned the Cabinet Member for Children and Young People, the Director of CYPS and senior officers from the Metropolitan Police Service, NHS Haringey (formerly the Teaching Primary Care Trust) and Great Ormond Street Hospital Trust. The committee resolved:

That the report and action plan be noted and that the Overview and Scrutiny Committee feedback on the Action Plan in response to the Joint Area Review of Safeguarding in Haringey be put forward for consideration by Cabinet.

- 4.2 The Overview and Scrutiny process has provided a valuable examination of the work of the JAR Action plan project board. As the plan has developed we are pleased to see that some of the points raised at the meeting have already been made by others and incorporated into later versions of the plan. In our comments below we set out where the point made by the committee is represented in the current plan, without seeking to detail in all cases whether it was introduced as a direct result of the Overview and Scrutiny comments or due to suggestions from other stakeholders.

- 4.3 Overview and Scrutiny Committee feedback on the Action Plan in response to the Joint Area Review of Safeguarding in Haringey:

- i) That the lack of “joined-up” communication both within organisations and between partner organisations be emphasised as a key issue and addressed more explicitly in the action plan.

Comment: joining up effective communications at all levels is central to the plan and will be achieved through a range of measures including:

- Strengthening leadership working across the Children’s Trust (Theme 1 – Leadership and Partnership)
- Developing a shared communications strategy (1.4.4)
- The important Information Sharing area for improvement (2.2)
- Improvements in the workings of child protection meetings (2.5)
- Exploring further alignment of services across agencies (3.4)
- Cross-agency engagement and communications (6.4)

Additionally, the cross-agency process of plan development was itself, as designed, a significant step in building cross-agency relationships and partnership, not only at a senior level, but also through multi-agency staff events and consultation.

- ii) That the importance of publicity for raising awareness of the role of the public in safeguarding children and mechanisms for reporting concerns be reflected

in the action plan, and that communication material be reviewed and enhanced as necessary.

Comment: the committee have drawn attention to a vital area in ensuring all play their part in safeguarding children and young people. The development of a shared communications strategy (1.4.4) will directly address this point, and the actions specified under 7.3.4 will ensure that the key messages reach all of Haringey's diverse communities.

- iii) That the action plan clearly identify systems for monitoring the mandatory safeguarding training for GPs, health workers and other professionals in regular and sustained contact with children and families.

Comment: in implementing the plan, all training will be evaluated both directly and through the provisions made in the plan for measuring outcomes.

- iv) That the Council continue to lobby central Government in relation to the grant settlement, to address the current funding disparity compared with inner London Boroughs, in particular identifying a need for our social workers to be paid Inner London Weighting in the same way that we choose to pay our teachers.

Comment: The Leader and Cabinet Member for Children and Young People have already raised the issue of the grant settlement with ministers and will continue to do so.

- v) That the Council continue to lobby central Government in relation to the issue of obtaining CRB checks for all elected Members being investigated further, considering the current legislative framework.

Comment: the Council has not lobbied Government on this issue as we were responding to the recommendation in the JAR. The matter needs further discussion with Members and other authorities.

- vi) That the action plan include the development of a clear protocol on Members' access to information in accordance with national legislation, specifically relating to the different roles within the Authority, such as the accountable Cabinet Member and Corporate Parenting roles of all Councillors, in order to facilitate the discharge of their statutory duties.

Comment: this is now included in the plan at 2.2.2.

- vii) That the areas of the action plan relating to education be further developed, to explicitly include measures for the monitoring of challenging behaviour and

attendance issues as possible indicators of child protection issues. That the action plan also include the issue of ensuring pastoral teams are in place in all schools, that best practice in this area is shared, and that monitoring visits from the Local Authority place an emphasis on this and on Safeguarding in general. In addition, that the action plan includes closer monitoring of the educational achievement of children with Child Protection Plans and children educated at home, and that the feasibility of co-ordinating all relevant personal plans, for example Child Protection Plans, Personal Education Plans, etc, to form a single document for each child be explored.

Comment: all of these points will be explored in detail in achieving a 'clear set of expectations of universal services' (4.1.5) and monitored through the twice yearly vulnerable children meeting with every school, children's centre and children's home (4.1.4).

- viii) That the role of Housing Services in safeguarding children be further developed in the action plan, and reflected in the development of the new Housing Strategy, and in particular that all Housing Officers are CRB-checked and provided with regular Safeguarding training due to their ongoing close contact with vulnerable children and families.

Comment: our intention further to develop the role of Housing Services is made clear in 2.2.7 and 2.2.8. We will ask the Cabinet Member for Housing Services to ensure this work is reflected in the new Housing Strategy and to seek advice from the Assistant Chief Executive, People and Organisational Development, on the extension of CRB to all Housing Officers.

- ix) That the need for transparency relating to the resource contributions of all partners be emphasised.

Comment: this will be addressed in taking forward the implementation of the plan and following further discussions with the Secretary of State for Children, Schools and Families on resources.

- x) That the possibility of developing local performance indicators in respect of safeguarding children be explored.

Comment: a range of local performance indicators are monitored and these will support the monitoring of our achievements against the plan. The LSCB Quality Assurance sub-group is currently developing new qualitative measures for monitoring safeguarding practice (7.1.2). In refreshing our Local Area Agreement (LAA) we have put forward two new safeguarding performance indicators in addition to those already in the LAA. It is proposed that Haringey's LAA will now include:

- National Indicator (NI) 59 Percentage of initial assessments for children's social care carried out within 7 working days of referral (to be one of the LAA 35 improvement targets)
- NI 62 Stability of placements of looked after children : number of placements (LAA local target)
- NI 66 Looked after children cases which were reviewed within required timescales (LAA local target)
- NI 67 percentage of child protection cases which were reviewed within required timescales (LAA local target)

- xi) The quality and comprehensiveness of information exchanged between partners and between council officers and Members to be addressed more transparently in the action plan.

Comment: this will be addressed in the new 2.2.2 (see vi above)

- xii) That details of the role of Scrutiny in child protection be further developed.

Comment: this will be specifically addressed in carrying out 7.2.1.

- xiii) That the action plan details more thoroughly how the views of all children with CPPs or who are Looked After will be listened to regularly, including the views of primary age children, children living in placements outside of the borough, children in short-term/interim fostering arrangements, and children in informal/family-based fostering arrangements.

Comment: this is specifically addressed in 7.3.1, 7.3.2 and 7.3.3.

- xiv) That good mental health and wellbeing of social workers is a priority, and that the Haringey Offer for social workers includes regular meetings with line managers and/or counsellors that focus on this.

Comment: in developing the Haringey offer for social workers (6.1.1) we will be specifically concerned with the personal support offered to social workers and other staff. This is further reinforced by the emphasis on effective supervision processes in the plan, particularly in area for improvement 6.2 (supervision and management) and in the work with the Tavistock and Portman Trust with social work staff and managers (6.3.6).

- xv) That the Council ensures that every area of the Council's work and services regularly monitors the roles it can play in Safeguarding, and in particular that IT is used to minimise the written work necessary of frontline social work staff.

Comment: We will consult across the council to establish effective arrangements to allow such monitoring to take place. The second point is dealt with at 2.4.3 (ICS / framework-i) and through 3.6.2 (mobile technology).