



<b>Briefing for:</b>	Children's Safeguarding Policy and Performance Advisory Committee
<b>Title:</b>	Role of Children's Safeguarding Policy and Performance Advisory Committee
<b>Lead Officer:</b>	Hilary Corrick, Independent Social work Consultant, and Independent Panel Member
<b>Date:</b>	25th January 2010

## **1. Introduction**

The Children's Safeguarding Policy and Performance Advisory Committee was set up by the council in April 2009 to enable it to examine in more detail the work of children's services and:

- ensure that members have some understanding of the key child protection issues;
- ensure that members have confidence in the safeguarding arrangements and practice in Haringey;
- ensure that members have developed a range of questions which enable them to consider all aspects of safeguarding and which can be shared with other members.

It was intended that the Committee would be short life, possibly only until the elections in May 2010. It would include an independent Member with safeguarding experience.

## **2. Background information**

Members had felt that they had insufficient knowledge and experience in safeguarding children to challenge or scrutinise the work of Children's Social Care; the Committee would give them more in-depth understanding, the opportunity to consider cases in detail, and meet with service users, referrers and front line workers when appropriate.



## **Haringey Council**

The Members on the Committee all brought specific, relevant experience and skills to the group. The Committee is smaller and more intimate than some other council Committees, and experience has been that officers have been open and engaged in supporting Members to increase their understanding.

There is a range of other mechanisms for scrutinising safeguarding work in Haringey, and it now seems relevant to consider where this Committee “sits” alongside other work, and whether Members feel that the Committee should have an on-going role, or are confident that the safeguarding work of the authority is adequately scrutinised by these other mechanisms.

**Haringey Safeguarding Children Board** is a multi-agency group, independently chaired, and constituted under nationally laid down terms of reference. The Board undertakes multi-agency audits of randomly selected cases on a regular basis. The future work plan will involve cross cutting audits around the key areas identified across numbers of Serious Case Reviews:

- Substance misuse;
- Domestic Violence;
- Mental illness;
- Learning disability;
- Parent previously in care or abused.

There is very limited Member involvement in the Safeguarding Children Board: the Executive Member for Children sits on the Board.

**The Overview and Scrutiny Committee** is an all-party committee of members, mainly backbenchers, with some community representation. This Committee has set up 4 special meetings throughout 2009 – 2010 to focus on children’s services, which are attended by the Executive member and relevant officers. These meetings are open to the public. The Committee focuses on indicators rather than individual cases.

**The Executive Member for Children** commissions regular audits from an independent consultant. These focus on individual cases and particularly the quality of initial and core assessments.

**Children’s Services** themselves now have a robust programme of internal audits of cases, using a validated audit tool so that performance can be scrutinised over time.

### **3. Options for consideration**

The Children’s Safeguarding Policy and Performance Committee should consider their priorities for scrutiny for the remainder of this session in the light of these other auditing bodies. After May there should be some debate as to whether there is a continuing role for such a Committee.

The areas where there is less external audit are:



**Haringey Council**

- the voice of service users (children and their parents) and referrers;
- tracking cases over a period.

These are pieces of work which this Committee has already begun to tackle.

It might also be worth considering a focus on particularly vulnerable groups of children, such as the under two's. There are also groups of vulnerable children who fall just below the eligibility thresholds, and the Committee might wish to explore the robustness of preventative services by tracking some of those children.