

**MINUTES OF THE OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE
THURSDAY, 3 DECEMBER 2009**

Councillors Councillors Bull (Chair), Adamou (Vice-Chair), Allison, Aitken, Mallett and Newton

Apologies Councillor Adje and Kania

Also Present: marsh (Church Representative), Joseph Ejiofor (Parent Governor Representative) and Sarah Marsh (Parent Governor Representative), Councillors Engert and Reith

MINUTE NO.	SUBJECT/DECISION
OSCO11.	<p>WEBCASTING</p> <p>The meeting was recorded for live or future broadcasting on the Council's website.</p>
OSCO12.	<p>APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE</p> <p>Apologies for absence were received from Helena Kania (LINKs), Councillors Adje, Winskill (who was substituted for by Councillor Allison) and Dogus.</p>
OSCO13.	<p>URGENT BUSINESS</p> <p>There was no urgent business.</p>
OSCO14.	<p>DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST</p> <p>There were no declarations of interest in relation to items on the agenda.</p>
OSCO15.	<p>DEPUTATIONS/PETITIONS/PRESENTATIONS/QUESTIONS</p> <p>There were no deputations, petitions or questions.</p>
OSCO16.	<p>MINUTES</p> <p>RESOLVED</p> <p>That the minutes of the meeting held on 17th September 2009 were confirmed as a correct record.</p> <p>The following matters arose:</p> <p><u>OSCO07 – Joint Area Review Action Plan Update</u> (Page 2 of agenda pack)</p>

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	<p>The Committee was informed that the Director of Children’s Services and the Deputy Director – Children & Families had attended a monthly meeting with Government Office for London officers the previous day and were informed that the request for further funding from the Department for Children, Schools and Families (DCSF) to cover short term capacity needs was being considered by the Secretary of State and a response would be provided the following week. Details of the response would be circulated to Committee Members.</p> <p>The Committee asked whether the target to clear the backlog of cases by December 2009 had been met. Eleanor Brazil (Deputy Director – Children and Families) informed members that the issue had been with initial and core assessments not being completed within timescales. The Committee noted that whilst some assessments were out of time there was no backlog.</p> <p><u>OSCO08 – Children’s Safeguarding Policy and Practice Advisory Committee – update on the work of the Panel (Page 3 of agenda pack)</u></p> <p>The Committee noted that the Children’s Safeguarding Policy and Practice Advisory Committee had not met since the last Child Protection Overview & Scrutiny Committee to discuss monitoring when parents failed to take their children for health checks.</p>
<p>OSCO17.</p>	<p>ORDER OF AGENDA</p> <p>The order of the agenda was varied to consider item 9 first. The minutes will appear in the same order as items listed on the agenda.</p>
<p>OSCO18.</p>	<p>JOINT AREA REVIEW ACTION PLAN - UPDATE ON PROGRESS</p> <p>The Committee received the update on progress of the Joint Area Review Action Plan, introduced by Mark Gwynne (Joint Area Review (JAR) Programme Manager). Councillor Reith (Cabinet Member for Children & Young People), Eleanor Brazil (Deputy Director – Children & Families) and Dave Grant (Borough Commander) also attended to answer the Committee’s questions.</p> <p>A report on child protection would be requested from the NHS including information on processes for early intervention, GPs involvement in Children Centres and the role of Health Visitors. This would be considered at a future meeting of the Overview & Scrutiny Committee.</p> <p>The Borough Commander explained the process for assessing notifications of children at risk and referring to the correct agency so as not to inundate the Council’s First Response Team. He explained that agencies were in the process of setting up multi-disciplinary teams in order to be more effective in referrals. The multi-disciplinary team would be trained on the multi-agency database systems, including Framework-i, with a view to being operational in April 2010.</p>

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	<p>The Committee noted that the NHS had recently interviewed a number of Health Visitors which had resulted in only 1.6 posts being filled.</p> <p>The Committee were informed that a Great Ormond Street Hospital (GOSH) review of the Health Visitor Service had concluded that Health Visitors understood their roles in referring cases to other agencies if the threshold for a child to receive Social Care was not met.</p> <p>The Committee noted that the Children's Safeguarding Policy and Practice Advisory Committee had considered information showing that large numbers of GPs had attended safeguarding training in Haringey. This information would be circulated to Committee Members.</p> <p>Members expressed concerns that GPs were being trained and still not referring potential child protection cases. Statistics for referrals from GPs would be circulated to Members.</p> <p>The Committee noted that a number of actions on the Safeguarding Plan Milestone Report (Appendix 2 of the report) had now been completed or were back on track. An updated Milestone report would be circulated to Committee Members.</p> <p>The Committee enquired about the forthcoming Ofsted/DCSF inspection in January 2010 and was informed that it would be an inspection on the progress of the Children's Service, similar to the one undertaken in June 2009 although officers were seeking clarification about the criteria that the Service would be measured against.</p> <p>RESOLVED</p> <p>That the report be noted.</p>	
<p>OSCO19.</p>	<p>CHILDREN'S SAFEGUARDING POLICY AND PRACTICE ADVISORY COMMITTEE - UPDATE ON THE WORK OF THE PANEL</p> <p>The Committee received the Children's Safeguarding Policy and Practice Advisory Committee update introduced by Hilary Corrick (Independent Member of the Children's Safeguarding Policy and Practice Advisory Committee).</p> <p>The Committee noted that, whilst there were mechanisms for children's voices to be heard including child protection conferences, speaking to children in schools and evaluation forms, the responses were low. The Advisory Committee would be considering how to ensure the voices of Looked After Children (LAC) and Children with Disabilities were heard and how they could be involved in issues that affected them, including formalising the Haringey Children in Care Council.</p>	

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	<p>The Assistant Director of Adult Services, Lisa Redfern, informed the Committee that a workshop on the transition of children into the Adults Service had recently taken place and a Scrutiny Review would follow to consider how processes were working including the sharing of information between Children's and Adult Services, cross-agency working, planning transitions at early stages and ways to improve. The outcomes of the Transition Workshop would be circulated to Committee Members.</p> <p>The Committee asked how young carers were recognised. The Deputy Director – Children & Families explained that whilst Children's Services were ultimately responsible for young carers there was difficulty in recognising children in this group. The Adults Service often identified young carers and the Action for Children charity worked with schools to assist in identifying young carers. Officers recognised the importance of cross-agency working to improve the recognition of and support provided to young carers.</p> <p>The Committee requested more detail of how the Children's Safeguarding Policy and Practice Advisory Committee would be looking at young people who were lost in the system or not picked-up by Children's and Adults Services.</p> <p>RESOLVED</p> <p>That the report be noted.</p>	
<p>OSCO20.</p>	<p>CHILD PROTECTION PERFORMANCE AND KEY ISSUES REPORT</p> <p>The Committee received the report updating on key performance issues in child protection, introduced by Mark Gurrey (Interim Assistant Director – Children & Young People - Performance).</p> <p>Members were invited to ask supplementary questions to the advance questions and written answers that had been tabled.</p> <p>The Committee asked for more information about staffing levels. Councillor Reith (Cabinet Member for Children & Young People) and the Deputy Director – Children & Families, informed Members that the service was fully staffed but on-going recruitment was helping to reduce the number of agency staff in Children's Services as well as having a Graduate Trainee Social Worker scheme in place which resulted in 6 newly qualified Social Workers joining the Council in July 2009. The number of trainee Social Workers would increase to 12 plus a further 5 studying for an MA in the coming year. The Committee noted, in response to its concerns about the long-term commitment of the 9 American Social Workers recently recruited, that the overseas Social Workers were contracted to a minimum of 2 years with Haringey; they were provided with benefits and often remained longer than the contracted time.</p> <p>The largest gaps in permanent staff were within the First Response</p>	

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and Safeguarding Teams where the newly qualified Social Workers and newly recruited American Social Workers would move into these teams. Many front-line managers were long-term agency staff (who chose not to become permanent for various reasons) but the Service was working towards recruiting permanent managers including a scheme offering additional pay if they remained with the Council after a period of time. The Committee noted that recruitment to Social Work positions was difficult in London and nationally.

Officers recognised the high cost of agency staff and explained that current staffing levels would be retained until January 2010 to allow for newly qualified Social Workers to settle-into full workloads after which a review of staffing levels would take place.

The Committee noted that Heads of First Response and Safeguarding had recently been appointed and a number of good responses to adverts for a Head of Service – Children in Care had been received.

The Committee would be provided with a breakdown of vacant posts in each department within Children’s Services.

In response to concerns about the perception that children were being lost in the system (for example the number of referrals received between April and October 2009 were higher than the number of initial assessments completed), the Committee noted that some referrals, having been through a rigorous risk assessment, were considered to require “no further action” (NFA).

Officers assured the Committee that children were not being lost in the system and a robust system, where managers received a detailed breakdown of cases at the start of every week, was in place to monitor and prioritise cases.

Hilary Corrick (Vice-Chair and Independent Member of the Policy & Practice Advisory Committee) highlighted that the Advisory Committee tracked and followed a number of referrals received by the Council during one day and would continue to do such random monitoring to ensure quality of the work of First Response Team.

The Committee asked whether Police Officers cross-checked cases of domestic violence against the child protection register. The Borough Commander explained that Officers in the Police Control room conducted checks on individuals and other occupants of premises involved. If a child was present in a property where domestic violence occurred a Police report would be submitted to the Council’s Social Care Team.

The Committee noted that the advance supplementary questions submitted by Joseph Ejiofor (Parent Governor) were subject to further analysis and would be answered in writing after the meeting.

RESOLVED

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	That the report be noted.
OSCO21.	NEW ITEMS OF URGENT BUSINESS There were no such items.
OSCO22.	FUTURE MEETINGS The next Child Protection Overview & Scrutiny Committee will be held on Monday 8 th March 2010 at 6pm.

The meeting ended at 21:00 hrs.

COUNCILLOR GIDEON BULL

Chair

SIGNED AT MEETING.....DAY

OF.....

CHAIR.....