



Report Title: **Report from Children's Safeguarding Policy and Performance Advisory Committee**

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

Contact Officer : Hilary Corrick, Independent Social Work Consultant, & Independent Member

Wards(s) affected: **ALL**

Report for: **Non Key Decision**

1. Purpose of the report

This report gives feedback from the most recent meeting of the Children's Safeguarding Policy and Performance Advisory Committee, with particular reference to the report recently (20th January) considered at Overview and Scrutiny Committee on local health visiting services.

2. Recommendations

That the Overview & Scrutiny Committee note and consider the report.

3. Reason for recommendation(s)

4. Other options considered

N/A

5. Chief Financial Officer Comments

N/A

6. Head of Legal Services Comments

N/A

7. Head of Procurement Comments

N/A

8. Equalities & Community Cohesion Comments N/A
9. Consultation N/A
10. Service Financial Comments There are no specific financial issues arising from this report.
11. Use of appendices / Tables and photographs
12. Local Government (Access to Information) Act 1985

Background

The Children's Safeguarding Policy and Performance Advisory Committee is a back bench Committee which looks in detail at safeguarding aspects of policy and practice. As such, it has links with the Overview and Scrutiny Committee and their regular reviews of child safeguarding work.

Report on Health Visiting Services

Councillor Mallett presented to the Committee a report which had previously been considered by the Overview and Scrutiny Committee at its meeting on 20th January 2010.

Members noted that in July 2008 the decision had been made by the PCT, due to staff shortages, to suspend the traditional universal health visiting services on a temporary basis and to concentrate on those in greatest need. This meant that children and families were assessed at the new birth visit, or on the first contact with the service and were then prioritised for further intervention. Where there were no concerns families were given contact details for any queries or concerns that they had. This is called "progressive universalism", and the independent member informed the Committee that this model is being implemented in other areas and is based on research evidence. The Overview and Scrutiny Committee had expressed concern that they had not been informed of these changes earlier and felt that there could be some stigmatisation around targeted services.

"Progressive universalism" allows health visiting services to use their limited resources of highly skilled and experienced health visitors (there are national shortages and an aging work force) in a targeted way, providing high levels of support to first time mothers and those with specific vulnerabilities from health visitors and other health staff. There are however, anxieties that the initial assessment may not always pick up significant concerns: for example, post natal depression, domestic violence, child disabilities. Some parents, thought likely to be low risk, might be too vulnerable to seek help themselves.

Officers advised that they had experienced some difficulties with contacting health visitors but that the situation should improve with the move to multi agency working and the location of three health visitors to be based in their offices. However there was concern that the health visiting duty desk was staffed by health visiting assistants or administrative staff and not qualified HV staff.

Members of the Children's Safeguarding Policy and Performance Advisory Committee were concerned about how the targeting was carried out given that the under fives are a particular vulnerable group. Also there was no reference to the views of families.

Recommendation: The Committee asked that the Overview and Scrutiny Committee request that NHS Haringey carry out an evaluation of the targeted service, now operational since July 2008, and consider convening a Parents' Focus group to establish the views of parents.

ANNUAL CHILD PROTECTION CONFERENCE

A proposal was made in September 2009 by the Chair of the Children's Safeguarding Policy and Performance Advisory Committee that the Overview and Scrutiny Committee, as part of its regular reviews of child protection work, should convene an annual child protection conference, in partnership possibly with the local Safeguarding Board. Members of the Committee endorsed this proposal and were anxious to know of progress in this matter.

COMMITTEE UPDATE

At their recent meeting members of the Children's Safeguarding Policy and Performance Advisory Committee received a report on the new eligibility thresholds now used by the Children and Young People's Service and widely disseminated across the authority.

Members were informed that the Children's Service were working on joint protocols with Adult Services. It was acknowledged that some adults with children were vulnerable and needed support. This had to be taken into account and worked with. Also it was noted that the adult threshold for receiving support was high and many adults who did not meet the threshold level needed additional support, especially if they had parenting responsibilities.

There was a detailed report setting out the processes from referral to review for children "at risk of significant harm" and an update on those cases subject to child protection processes being tracked by the Committee since July 1st 2009.

The Committee also considered their own role in the range of mechanisms for monitoring and auditing safeguarding in Haringey. Although it was thought that it had been intended that this Committee would be short term, members felt that it had a unique role in looking in detail at individual cases and processes, and that to disband the Committee would send out the wrong message. The Committee will report to Cabinet that the Committee should continue its work and possibly report direct to Council. It was essential that it should continue to be supported by an independent member.

Future work plans:

The Committee plans to look in detail all children under 5 referred in January 2010, or if the numbers were excessive, then to examine under 2s or a random selection of a percentage of under 5s referrals. Other areas for exploration include looking at children who fall just below the eligibility threshold, transition of children in need to services for vulnerable adults, and children of parents in receipt of adult social services.