

**MINUTES OF THE CHILDREN'S SAFEGUARDING POLICY AND PRACTICE ADVISORY COMMITTEE
MONDAY, 6 DECEMBER 2010**

Councillors Amin, Davies, Hare, McNamara and Rice (Chair)

Apologies None received

Also Present: Hilary Corrick, Marion Wheeler, Alison Botham

MINUTE NO.	SUBJECT/DECISION	ACTON BY
CSPAPC 20	<p>APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE</p> <p>No apologies for absence were received.</p>	
CSPAPC 21	<p>URGENT BUSINESS</p> <p>There were no items of urgent business submitted.</p>	
CSPAPC 22	<p>DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST</p> <p>There were no declarations of interest put forward.</p>	
CSPAPC 23	<p>MINUTES</p> <p>The minutes were agreed as an accurate record of the meeting.</p> <p>It was noted that Cllr Davies had been a member of this committee in the previous municipal year and it was agreed that the minutes be amended to reflect this.</p>	HDLMS
CSPAPC 24	<p>FUTURE OF THE CHILDREN'S SAFEGUARDING POLICY AND PRACTICE COMMITTEE</p> <p>At the previous meeting of the committee there had been discussion on its terms of reference, role in the committee structure, function and purpose. The Chair had met with the Cabinet Member for Children and Young People to discuss these issues further and compile proposals on the future of the committee for consideration at this meeting.</p> <p>Similarities of the committee's role to scrutiny and its position in the committee structure was discussed. It was felt that the committee was correctly aligned to the Cabinet as an Advisory Committee. This provided the committee with a long term status and allowed linkages to the Corporate Parenting Advisory Committee to be made. The Children's Safeguarding Policy and Practice Committee was constructed to work in parallel to the Corporate Parenting Advisory Committee and</p>	

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MONDAY, 6 DECEMBER 2010**

	<p>had duties for overseeing the Council's responsibility for children in need, particularly focussing on safeguarding. This included children that are at home, looked after children and children who would come into contact with safeguarding policies. Members noted that the Corporate Parenting Advisory Committee was also responsible for looked after children and focused on: improving their life chances, ensuring children had a voice in the safeguarding process, providing an advocacy function within the children's trust, and the council, on behalf of children in care, monitored the quality of their care and ensured that they had sustainable arrangements for their future and wellbeing.</p> <p>Members agreed that the profile of the committee should be raised and there should be more awareness of the committee's work. This would be assisted by increasing officer attendance at meetings and by amending the constitution of the committee so that it was more in line with the arrangements for the Corporate Parenting Committee. Clarification was sought on the current constitutional differences between the Corporate Parenting Advisory Committee and Safeguarding Policy and Practice committee and these were outlined.</p> <p>It was important that the Children's Safeguarding Policy and Practice Committee continue undertaking detailed case scrutiny into chosen day to day safeguarding practices as this was an essential qualitative function not carried out by any other committee in the Council. The Children's Safeguarding Policy and Practice Committee role was dissimilar to role of the Child Protection Overview and Scrutiny Committee which was involved in considering quantitative information and scrutinizing the overall performance of the child protection service.</p> <p>Members requested performance related reports on the daily activities of the safeguarding service and noted that these types of reports had been considered by the past membership of the committee. However thought would be given to adding performance related reports to committee's work programme for the year.</p> <p>RESOLVED</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. That the committee be reconstituted and work along similar lines to the Corporate Parenting Advisory Committee with a report compiled for Cabinet seeking ratification of this 2. That the role of the committee, in terms of detailed case scrutiny and the understanding of safeguarding policy, procedures and performance be unchanged. 	<p>DDC&F HLDMS</p> <p>DDC&F</p> <p>HLDMS</p> <p>DDC&F</p>
<p>CSPAPC 25</p>	<p>EXCLUSION OF THE PRESS AND PUBLIC</p> <p>That the press and public be excluded from the meeting for</p>	

**MINUTES OF THE CHILDREN'S SAFEGUARDING POLICY AND PRACTICE ADVISORY COMMITTEE
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	<p>consideration of the items below as they contain exempt information as defined in section 100a of the Local Government Act 1972 (as amended by section 12a of the Local Government Act 1985); paras 1&2; namely information relating to any individual, and information likely to reveal the identity of an individual.</p>	
<p>CSPAPC 26</p>	<p>CAF ACTION PLAN</p> <p>The committee considered the common assessment framework (CAF) action plan which set out activities undertaken to address issues highlighted in the audits of CAF practices undertaken in August and September. These actions would not take account of the recommendations made in the recent follow up audit work completed in November as there would not have been time to consider these proposals and add potential actions to the plan.</p> <p>The committee noted the particular issues highlighted for action in the audits which were: evaluation of assessments undertaken which had resulted in no additional service being required, level of information on CAF activity on Framework I and the backlog of CAF's to be reviewed by a manager. Members were advised that the CAF Panel continued to monitor cases where there was no service allocation agreed. Where there was poor quality information supplied on the CAF form, this was followed up by the CAF Panel, with referrers, to ensure important information was supplied. In response, to the detail of information held on Framework I concerning CAF decisions, we noted that the decisions taken by the CAF Panel were checked and ratified before addition to a child's record on Framework I which, usually meant that there was a delay in adding this information to the system following the panel meeting. The timescale for clearing the backlog of CAF cases for decision was by the end of the year.</p> <p>Clarification was sought on the training provided for referrers completing a CAF form. We were informed that Social Workers were already aware of the basic requirements of the CAF form, learned through their training. There were sessions provided by a combination of council officers and partner representatives for staff that are and should be undertaking CAF's. A new programme of training sessions on the due to start in Jan 2011.</p> <p>The committee noted the CAF action plan and agreed that it be a standing item on the agenda to enable them to be kept informed of the continuing work to clear the backlog of cases.</p> <p>There was concern expressed on the purpose, length and format of the CAF and whether it was always the right solution when seeking an additional service for a child. The committee however accepted that the information provided by the CAF could enable professionals at a CAF Panel meeting to detect any serious underlying issues the child maybe encountering. Also the discussion between the referrer and the parent, which the completion of the CAF form initiated, was recognised by the</p>	<p>AB</p>

**MINUTES OF THE CHILDREN'S SAFEGUARDING POLICY AND PRACTICE ADVISORY COMMITTEE
MONDAY, 6 DECEMBER 2010**

	<p>committee to be important in its own right.</p> <p>RESOLVED</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. That a progress report on the actions, particularly the backlog of cases, in the CAF Action Plan be considered at our next meeting in January. 2. That a workshop session between the CAF Panel, referrers, and the Children's Safeguarding Policy and Practice Committee is arranged to take place in the first quarter of the new year. The Independent Member in collaboration with the CAF Panel chair will devise a programme for this session. 	<p>AB</p> <p>AB/HC</p>
<p>CSPAPC 27</p>	<p>CAF AUDIT OF CASES</p> <p>The Independent Member of the committee had completed follow up work on a sample of CAF's assessed by the CAF Panel at their June meeting. The Independent Member had been commissioned to speak with the participants (referrers and parents) from the cases that she had audited from the June panels. These cases were disproportionately cases where the CAF Panel had decided they were not eligible for service, no further action was agreed, and where there was insufficient information provided.</p> <p>The Common Assessment Framework (CAF) is essentially a tool for identifying a child's needs, what was working well in their life, then putting in place a plan to make sure they get the support they need. Members were reminded that a CAF is only used where the child has an identified need which is below the threshold required for access to social care services, when completion of an initial and core assessment is necessary by a Social Worker. The CAF Panel meetings allowed professionals to assess the range of services a child may require and share existing information held on a child. The CAF Panel meets twice a month and had a wide attendance with appropriate officers/professionals that could make decisions and recommendations on CAF forms received.</p> <p>When considering the responses from the CAF audit and follow up work, it was important for the committee to examine these results with a note of caution as this was a qualitative study and the results were not designed to provide performance information on the CAF process. We learnt that half of the parents spoken to who had not obtained an additional service for their child, had been positive about the process as it had led to discussion about their child's needs with a professional (the referrer). Some referrers, not obtaining an additional service for a child, had been successful through an alternative route. Other referrers had expressed dissatisfaction about the process when not receiving a</p>	

MINUTES OF THE CHILDREN'S SAFEGUARDING POLICY AND PRACTICE ADVISORY COMMITTEE
MONDAY, 6 DECEMBER 2010

service. There was negativity noted about the length of the application with requests made by referrers for a simpler form, particularly when there was a single service required such as speech therapy. Generally parents were more positive about the CAF process than referrers. There was frustration expressed by participants about lack of feedback from the CAF Panel when a service was not agreed and about delays in service provision after a service had been agreed. This raised questions about the level of involvement of participants in the decision making part of the CAF process.

The committee discussed the importance of communication and how this was important in ensuring that referrer and parents had reasonable expectations about the CAF process. They suggested a need to ensure that referrers were aware, before the start of the CAF application, of all the routes to additional services and likelihood of receiving a service through these processes. They further suggested that participants should be encouraged to seek services such as speech /language therapy, EPS, or childcare more directly with the service instead of through the CAF. This could in turn contribute to reducing the number of cases deemed ineligible for an additional service and save time for the CAF Panel.

The performance of the CAF Panel was discussed and clarification sought on how its work compared to other boroughs. It was noted that the last external feedback on the service found it to be performing well in relation to the number of assessments completed. There were also emerging national recommendations which advocated the sole use of CAF for agreeing additional services around a child, with a low threshold of need, which the Council was already in line with. Members noted that any proposed amendments to the CAF process and monitoring arrangements for decisions made by the Panel would need to be considered together with the current capacity of the service in mind. We were assured that officers were continually looking at the most efficient and effective way of dealing with CAF applications whilst also keeping to key safeguarding requirements such as information sharing.

After considering the findings of the Independent Member study and discussion of these issues the following recommendations were put forward:

RESOLVED

1. That the CAF Panel should consider undertaking or commissioning a review of time scales, both for consideration of CAF assessments by the Panel from receipt of the assessment and also for the provision of agreed service.
2. That the CAF Panel should consider how the CAF Panel discussion could be recorded in Framework I, and whether it is possible for this to be done during the Panel meeting.

**MINUTES OF THE CHILDREN'S SAFEGUARDING POLICY AND PRACTICE ADVISORY COMMITTEE
MONDAY, 6 DECEMBER 2010**

	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 3. That the CAF Panel should consider some focused work with referrers about the possibility of simplifying the CAF form to make it more accessible. 4. That the CAF Panel should consider with service providers whether a full CAF is necessary for the provision of single services such as EPS and Speech Language Therapy, and whether it would be possible for schools and health professionals to apply direct for some services in some circumstances. 5. That the CAF Panel should consider providing more detailed feedback to referrers. 6. That the above recommendations from the committee are communicated to the Cabinet member for Children and Young People, in the form of a letter, for agreement and implementation. 	HLDMS
<p>CSPAPC 28</p>	<p>EXAMPLES OF CORE AND INITIAL ASSESSMENTS</p> <p>Committee members were provided with examples of recent core and initial assessments to aid their learning and understanding on how a child's need was assessed. We noted that an Initial Assessment for children in need would be completed in 10 working days. Core Assessments were completed for children with complex needs. These should be completed within 35 working days. Where there is evidence of significant harm a Child Protection Core Assessment is completed within 35 working days. Training was provided to the committee on the safeguarding work and processes followed by the Children & Young People in June 2010</p> <p>RESOLVED</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. That training information provided on the services and processes in safeguarding be re - circulated to Members of the committee for reference purposes. 2. That Members return the copies of initial and core assessment documents provided to the next meeting and raise any issues or queries they have. 3. That training sessions on relevant safeguarding issues are added to the committee's work programme. 	<p>HLDMS</p> <p>All to note</p> <p>MW</p>
<p>CSPAPC 29</p>	<p>ANY OTHER BUSINESS</p> <p>20th January 2011</p>	

**MINUTES OF THE CHILDREN'S SAFEGUARDING POLICY AND PRACTICE ADVISORY
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Cllr Reg Rice
Chair