

MINUTES OF THE CHILDREN'S SAFEGUARDING POLICY AND PRACTICE ADVISORY COMMITTEE

TUESDAY, 30 APRIL 2013

Councillors Adamou, Allison, Corrick and Stewart (Chair)

Apologies Councillor Bull and Scott

Also Present: Councillor Waters, Libby Blake, Marion Wheeler, Lisa Blundell, Lisa Redfern, Sue Southgate, Chrissy Austin.

MINUTE NO.	SUBJECT/DECISION	ACTION BY
CSPAP C133	APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE Apologies for absence were received from Councillor Bull and Councillor Scott.	
CSPAP C134	URGENT BUSINESS There were no items of urgent business submitted.	
CSPAP C135	DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST There were no declarations of interest put forward.	
CSPAP C136	MINUTES The minutes of the meeting held on the 21 st March 2013 were approved as an accurate record of the meeting.	
CSPAP C137	MATTERS ARISING Agreed that report on the MASH, Adoption and the broader consideration of Adults services referrals to Children's Services (if ready) be considered at the July meeting.	AD CS
CSPAP C138	PERFORMANCE REPORT The Assistant Director of Children's Services outlined the main highlights of the Performance report. The rate of children in care continued to decrease with 92 per 10,000, and although this was still higher than similar statistical neighbouring boroughs, it was a significant reduction from this point last year	

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(101). This was against the current national trend, where numbers were increasing. The Independent Member commented, that as numbers of looked after children increased nationally, there was a real national debate emerging on who is cared for by the local authority.

The Committee noted that the numbers of contacts and referrals was continuing to decrease at a good rate. The number of children subject to a child protection plan increased by 34 and although this was a reduction in the number and rate for February, it was, overall, still a higher number than statistical neighbouring boroughs. As highlighted at the last meeting, there had been a review into the thresholds being applied to place a child on a protection plan against the reasons to take a child off a plan. There was now a focus to ensure that the actions taken in the first three months of a plan maximise the possibilities for the child coming off a plan.

Meetings continued with independent child protection advisors to ensure that children remained on protection plans for the right reasons. The introduction of the Haringey 54000 programme would also greatly assist in the providing early help to families and in turn limiting the need for authoritative intervention from Children's social care services. The increase of children on plans was likely to be associated with the decrease in number of looked after children. It was recognised that both these figures were higher than statistical neighbouring boroughs. However, the Independent Member advised the Committee to keep in mind that there should be no 'right' or 'wrong' number of children on plans or in care. It was ensuring the right children were on plans and that children were being taken off child protection plans at the right time. Confidence in efforts to reduce the numbers of LAC should be taken from the fact that there was a steady decline in number and not a sudden decrease which would be more concerning.

There was a discussion about the number of days it took to adopt a child. It was recognised that performance in this area had greatly improved through continual business analysis of data and through the relentless pursuit, by managers, to ensure each step of the adoption process was completed on time; however there was still a need to improve on timescales. The Independent Member spoke about conversations on adoption, as an option, starting at the screening stage. In response, it was noted that the new Permanency policy does include the need to start considering the option of adoption at the point of the core assessment. It was noted that the pathway to adoption involved both Children's Cabinet Advisory Committees and as the Chair was keen that the Committee gain an understanding of pathway to adoption and have sight of the care planning. It was agreed the Director and Assistant Director of Children's Service discuss this request and provide a report on adoption which meets with the remit of the Children's Safeguarding Policy and Practice Committee. Agreed that this report come forward to the next meeting in July.

**Dir
CS/AD
CS**

The Committee noted the difficulty in setting a performance target for

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	<p>protection plans lasting more than two years. The service have to consider the level of risks that are being mitigated against by the child being on the plan, and keep up awareness of the number of families on plans. Therefore, having a target helps ensure the service is continually reviewing the families to ensure that the children are on the plans for the right reasons and that the risk is being effectively managed. There are currently 26 families in this predicament and the overall sense, in the service, is that the families are right to be on these plans for this period of time.</p> <p>In terms of the percentage of child protection cases which are reviewed within timescales, although the targets were close to being met, there was a consistent traffic light of red for the past 6 months and the Committee queried whether this target should be lower. It was explained that this was an inspirational target and in line with what good/excellent local authorities achieve. In the coming financial year, when the new targets for performance indicators were being set, account would be taken of the new single assessment process.</p>	
CSPAP C139	<p>NEW ITEMS OF URGENT BUSINESS</p> <p>There were no new items of urgent business put forward.</p>	
CSPAP C140	<p>EXCLUSION OF THE PRESS AND PUBLIC</p> <p>The Chair, had received legal advice from the deputy monitoring officer, before the start of the meeting, advising that the report on Screening written by the Independent Member of the Committee would be suitable for consideration in the open part of the meeting as the information would not make any person identifiable. The Committee agreed to move this report to the open part of the meeting and agreed for it to be published on the council's website.</p>	Clerk
CSPAP C141	<p>ADULT REFERRALS</p> <p>Section 11 of the Children's Act 2004 places a statutory duty on persons and bodies to ensure they have proper and robust arrangements to safeguard and promote the welfare of children. In the summer of 2012 the LSCB asked key partners agencies, including Adult services, to audit their services in respect of this role in supporting the safeguarding of children. The key meeting points between Children's and Adults services would be substance mis-use, clients with mental health issues and adults with learning difficulties.</p> <p>A case file audit process was in place and three questions were added to audits to ascertain if the client had contact with children and young people, were there any concerns related to the welfare of children and</p>	

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	<p>young people and whether contact had been made with CYPS. There were a total of 15 cases identified that involved a referral from Adult Services to Children's Services and the Independent Member had audited them and found that all the referrals were appropriate and dealt with promptly.</p> <p>The Independent Member remarked on the small number of referrals as she had expected more referrals relating to clients with mental health issues or domestic violence. The Committee were asked to keep in mind, that two thirds of the clients in Adults service are older people with over 3000 people in receipt of services It was clarified that these were cases that had been referred to Adults through the SOVA (Safeguarding of Vulnerable Adults) referral process. This audit sample did not encompass clients that are responsibility of: Adults with Learning Difficulties, Drugs Alcohol Action team, Adults with Physical Disabilities. Assistant Director for Adults and Community services offered to complete further sampling on these areas and there could be contact with Drugs Alcohol Action team to also ask if they could participate in a qualitative audit as well.</p> <p>In line with the Children's services wider support to families, the Committee felt it would be worthwhile examining how referrals from Children's services are taken forward by Adults services along with how referrals were taken forward by Children's Services, once received by Adults services.</p> <p>Reference was made to case number 13 and it was agreed that an update on this particular case was brought back to the next Committee meeting.</p>	<p>AD Adults</p> <p>HC</p> <p>AD CS</p>
CSPAC 142	<p>AUDIT OF A SAMPLE OF REFERRALS MADE BY THE SCREENING TEAM</p> <p>The Independent Member had completed a case audit of referrals to the Screening team .In the introduction section of the report the Independent Member had provided some background to the audit and made references to the Judicial Review. The Independent Member clarified that she may have over emphasised certain aspects of the case. For example, the background wrongly implied that the unlawful sharing of information stemmed from the information sharing strategy in use by the MASH. This was implied in the judgement but not stipulated.</p> <p>The Independent Member had completed her case audit of referrals; 4 days after the temporary information sharing protocol had been put in place. The Committee noted that there around 20-25 referrals to the First Response team every day with discussions held with the referrer when they are received. The Committee heard about the different kinds of case referrals received by the Screening team and the sources of the referral. The Independent Member had examined if consent was being sought and where consent was not given the details of the actions taken. In the cases looked at there was good recording of the checks being</p>	

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made and permissions to share information being sought was recorded. The report advised that the managers had absorbed the issues raised by the judgement in the cases seen.

It was explained to the Committee that when First Response receive a referral it will sometimes be obvious that a strategy meeting is needed but there will be cases where the information provided is ambiguous and there will need to be further clarifications provided from the referrer to assess the right way forward. It was explained to the Committee that, prior to the Judicial Review, some cases where information was missing, would be considered by the MASH (Multi Agency Safeguarding Hub) for an early view and some were dismissed at this stage. The judgement currently suggests that, where there is ambiguous information provided in a referral and it does not meet threshold for social care assessment, you cannot make enquiries with partners and agencies about the family without parental consent.

In response to a question about information needed to take forward a section 47 investigation, where it is not clear that this type of intervention is needed a section 17 should be implemented and this will enable a visit to the family. After this a move to a section 47 investigation can be made, if needed. The Committee were advised that, if it is not clear whether a section 17 or section 47 investigation is required, the judgement currently implies that no action is taken. This still leaves the service with an open case until consent is obtained from the parent by the referrer or Screening team or information is obtained which meets the threshold for a section 17 investigation.

The Committee were advised that the way forward was encouraging the referrer (Midwife, Teacher, and GP) who was in contact with the family seeking consent to make enquiries about the welfare of the child/young person. The merits of this were that the family are being approached by a professional that they already have a working relationship with. The Committee highlighted that the referrer will need to be sufficiently confident in this responsibility and trained appropriately to approach the subject of their concern about the child with the parents and seek approval to make further enquiries about the welfare of the child. The Committee further commented that the social worker would be experienced and educated in the role of approaching a family or person as opposed to a professional from the third sector that may not have the necessary skills to perform this role. The Committee were advised that, in terms of reporting issues and making referrals to First Response, going forward, if there was more onuses placed on schools and other agencies for taking forward their concerns with the family this would lead to better reporting and better ownership of the issues to be addressed.

The Committee learnt that there were a range of reasons why parental consent could be dispensed with and these would need to be written down before action, such as a section 47, is taken forward. This was one of the areas the council was found not to have fulfilled appropriately in the Judicial Review.

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	<p>The Committee were further asked to note that the council was still waiting formal interpretation of the full implications of the judgment on information sharing between partners from a QC who specialised in data protection. When received, this advice and its implications would be formally considered at the LSCB and by this Committee. The Committee were keen to ensure that wider community groups and stakeholders were aware of the current status of information sharing and their responsibility for providing quality information at the time of the referral to avoid ambiguity and quicker assessment of the referral. They would also need to be clear on their responsibilities for seeking consent from parents to share information with partners. The Chair felt there should be a formal process around this to ensure there was adherence to these responsibilities, especially for organisations that may not be in daily contact with Children Services and will not be fully aware of the changes. A formal process will allow issues around compliance to be raised. The Committee wanted to ensure that all local stakeholders that are in contact with children/families were fully aware of their responsibilities and did not sit on information because they were unsure of the process or had the skills to take a referral forward. The Chair requested an update on engagement and involvement with wider community groups/stakeholders at the next meeting.</p> <p>In connection with the responsibilities of professionals and support workers working with families, the Committee were informed that clear direction would ensure there was no anxiety at the ground level when working with families. This would really reassure the work force and help with judgement calls. This would in turn translate into better performance. It was important to be clear on the specifics of a case and provide wider understanding of the implications. The clear message being given out by the service was that if you record you protect. There should be clear accountable reasons for ignoring consent of the parent to share information.</p> <p>The Committee agreed to consider advice of the QC on information sharing at their next meeting in July and get a wider report back on engagement with wider community groups on the changes relating to information sharing and their roles and responsibility.</p>	HC
CSPAP C143	<p>UPDATE ON THE PROTOCOLS FOR INFORMATION SHARING BY THE MASH(MULTI AGENCY SAFEGUARDING HUB)</p> <p>Agreed that the advice of the QC on the implications for partner's information sharing is considered at the next meeting in July.</p>	Dir CS
CSPAP C144	NEW ITEMS OF EXEMPT URGENT BUSINESS	

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	There were no items of exempt urgent business put forward.	
CSPAP C145	ANY OTHER BUSINESS There were no other items of business.	

Cllr James Stewart

Chair