

MINUTES OF THE CHILDREN'S SAFEGUARDING POLICY AND PRACTICE ADVISORY COMMITTEE
THURSDAY, 23 JANUARY 2014

Councillors Browne, Corrick, Scott and Stewart (Chair)

Apologies Councillor Adamou

Also Present: Zina Etheridge, Lisa Redfern, Myra O'Farrell, Elaine Redding, Richard Hutton, Iain Low

MINUTE NO.	SUBJECT/DECISION	ACTION BY
TEX178.	APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE Apologies for absence were received from Cllr Adamou.	Clerk
TEX179.	URGENT BUSINESS The Chair had agreed to accept the LADO report [Local Authority Designated Officer report as a late item of urgent business. This report provided Committee Members with information about the number of allegations of abuse or maltreatment of children by a professional person working with children, staff member, foster carer or volunteer in the borough for the period April to December 2013.	
TEX180.	DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST There were no declarations of interest put forward.	
TEX181.	MINUTES 17 SEPTEMBER 2013 The minutes of the meeting held on the 17 th September were agreed as an accurate record of the meeting.	Clerk
TEX182.	MATTERS ARISING The Independent Member would complete her audit on outcomes for the next meeting of the Committee on the 1 st of April 2014.	Clerk
TEX183.	PERFORMANCE REPORT The Committee received a summary of the report and noted the following: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The continued downward trend in the number of children subject to a child protection plan • The work to ensure that single assessments are completed in 45 days with the target for completing the first part of the assessment within 10 days at 95% with performance currently at 81% 	

MINUTES OF THE CHILDREN'S SAFEGUARDING POLICY AND PRACTICE ADVISORY COMMITTEE
THURSDAY, 23 JANUARY 2014

- Child Protection Plan lasting for 2 years or more was close to statistical neighbours.
- 10% of children that have become the subject of a child protection plan for a second or subsequent time stood at 10% against lower than statistical neighbours who were performing at 13%.
- 1000 fewer contacts than last year

The Chair queried the drop in contacts and downward trend in the number of children subject to a plan and sought an understanding of the monitoring around this. He felt, given the additional downward trends in the number of looked after children, the number of children on a plan should be higher. The Acting Director of the Children's service explained that there are monthly senior officer meetings to analyse performance indicators and this officer group are concentrating on contacts, referrals and number of child protection plans. There is a significant amount of focus on contracts with an examination of the key issues and facts coming through to the service together with an analysis of the issues that are being escalated to referrals. Agreed that there is an update to the April Committee meeting on the work of this officer performance group or sooner to the Committee if available.

**Dir CS
(Acting)**

There was a consensus, that comparing performance information to that of statistical neighbours was a useful bench mark but it was more vital to be aware of the information behind the performance figures and be able to judge what the trends were and how the council were tackling emerging issues quickly. For example, the analysis was currently showing an increase in referrals due to emotional abuse.

Members sought an understanding of the issues that may impact on the completion of assessments and were aware of the recent re-configuration of the Framework I system. The Committee were informed that the configuration was an ongoing process and modification of the system would improve the timeliness of recording and work management. The Director for Children's Services(Acting) felt it was essential to improve the performance of initial assessments to 10 days and managers were fully aware of their accountability for ensuring these targets were met .

The Committee referred to the previous audit completed by the Independent Member in the timeliness of initial assessments and the findings which had assured them that the children were not put at risk. The common theme around not completing the initial assessment, in the 10 days, had been the social worker and police not being able to get access to the child at the given address. The Committee accepted that there was a need to continually monitor the issues around meeting targets for assessments and look at the cases, individually, to ensure that blockages are not caused by management systems and processes and that follow up visits are timetabled as quickly as possible.

The monitoring and quick identification of performance issues was being greatly assisted by the CDU(Corporate Delivery Unit) efforts to embed

**MINUTES OF THE CHILDREN'S SAFEGUARDING POLICY AND PRACTICE ADVISORY COMMITTEE
THURSDAY, 23 JANUARY 2014**

	<p>children's social work data so that it is available for the manager to view in real time. Managers were now able to view weekly performance information, instead of on a monthly basis, and begin to address issues such as delayed visits or completion of initial assessments more quickly.</p> <p>The message being given out to staff and managers was the importance of keeping to targets for the benefit of children and meeting their needs quickly. The Acting Director of Children's services further outlined how she is held to account by the Senior officers, the CDU and there are several tiers of scrutiny in place to further hold the director to account.</p>	
<p>TEX184.</p>	<p>EXTERNAL REPORT FROM SKYLAKES</p> <p>Following the AB CD judgement in March 2013, the previous Director of Children's Services had commissioned an independent review of S47 Child Protections Investigations from Skylakes. This had been conducted between May 2011 and March 2013. The improvement areas identified by the audit were listed along with the actions being taken by the service to address them.</p> <p>The Director of Children's Service(Acting) apologised to the Committee for the delay in the report coming forward and assured Members that the improvement areas identified were being taken forward very seriously. It was further explained that the initial version of the report, supplied to the council, contained a number of grammatical errors and had presentation issues and assisted in the delay of the report coming forward.</p> <p>The Chair felt that the Committee had already investigated the council's conduct in section 47's in a thorough manner and were assured that improvements were being made in the following areas; getting permissions from parents before seeking information from agencies, social workers having a better understanding about when permission is not required, and understanding of the 'Working Together guidance' by First Response.</p> <p>Members were also assured that the improvements highlighted by Skylakes, were part of an improvement plan on section 47s being worked to which would feed into the overall strategic plan of the service and the partnership work with iMPower. These plans were assessed by the service on a monthly basis and all aspects of the actions attached to the plan were carefully scrutinised.</p> <p>The importance of having a good Quality Assurance Framework was outlined and having live issues on the quality assurance cycle with a suite of information behind them for the service to consistently understand the issues. For example, the service were now looking at how they were handling Domestic Violence cases, the quality and timeliness of single assessments. The lead auditor would also be working alongside managers and the quality assurance and auditing</p>	

MINUTES OF THE CHILDREN'S SAFEGUARDING POLICY AND PRACTICE ADVISORY COMMITTEE
THURSDAY, 23 JANUARY 2014

	<p>process was built into the supervision process.</p> <p>There was discussion about whether there was a case for the Committee monitoring the use of Section 47's to ensure that the circumstances for taking one forward were being followed appropriately. It was explained that a section 47 can be started and as investigations progress, and the criteria is not met, the investigation stepped down.</p> <p>The Committee commented that the fundamental requirement was to ensure that Social Worker's recording was timely, accurate, and followed the required guidance for seeking permissions to investigate. If this was all correctly pursued then there should not be a reason to question the decisions that were being made. Added information on how the service's internal quality assurance exercise was analysing the use of section 47's could be made available in the next performance report to committee in April.</p> <p>The Committee commented on Skylakes findings concerning the little evidence of how the families are referred to a drop down service such as the CAF team. The Committee were assured that this was being addressed and there was better links between the First Response team and CAF team to ensure that families were passed quickly to universal support services .</p> <p>The report was noted.</p>	<p>AD QA</p>
<p>TEX185.</p>	<p>THE INDEPENDENT MEMBER'S QUALITATIVE AUDIT ON DECISIONS TO UNDERTAKE A SECTION 47 INVESTIGATION</p> <p>At the September Committee meeting, the Independent Member was asked to complete a qualitative audit of a sample of child protection investigations and focus on the rationale in each case for taking forward a section 47 investigation. The Committee were particularly keen to understand if investigations were undertaken too lightly or if there were occasions when a section 47 should have been followed but were not pursued.</p> <p>The report from the Independent Member provided a comparison of the percentage of section 47 investigations proceeding to a ICPC[Initial Child Protection Conference] in Haringey in comparison to statistical comparator boroughs in the year 2012/13 and Haringey were the fourth highest in this group but close to the comparator average. The Independent Member reported that for the first 6 months of the 2013/14 year the council's rate had fallen, putting it alongside Lambeth and Southwark.</p> <p>The Independent Member remarked that the Skylakes reports, together with the Committee's previous commissioned qualitative reports, reflected the mix in recording practices.</p> <p>The Committee went through 21 cases with the majority demonstrating good practice and all indicating that permission to share information had</p>	

MINUTES OF THE CHILDREN'S SAFEGUARDING POLICY AND PRACTICE ADVISORY COMMITTEE
THURSDAY, 23 JANUARY 2014

	<p>been sought. The Committee looked closely at 6 cases where there were concerns by the Independent Member about: the appropriateness of section 47 investigation ,a safeguarding issue not being pursued by the agency coming into contract with a young person who was under 18, recording , speed of follow up . Following discussion about two of the cases, the Independent Member accepted that the social worker would have needed the mandate provided by the section 47 to complete an investigation, given the initial circumstances they had been faced with.</p> <p>The Committee noted the availability of the LSCB conducting a section 11 investigation to understand how agencies were passing information about safeguarding concerns onto Children’s services. The Children’s service was focussing on quality assurance and ensuring the multi agency role around a family was also compliance tested.</p> <p>The independent Member, Committee and officers agreed the key learning from the well documented cases was using the mandate the section 47 investigation provided, when the circumstances of the case lead the social worker to understand that the child is suffering or is likely to suffer , significant harm, but stepping down the case when information is obtained that the child is not at risk.</p> <p>The Committee spoke about the importance of recording and asked how social workers can be further equipped and supported to ensure that they can record in a timely and efficient way. In response, it was noted that social workers are able to use their laptops on visits and it was about ensuring that recording notes from a meeting or visit is a discipline and not a habit. The Committee were advised that recording should not become an onerous task but be in a succinct fashion and set out the key issues.</p>	
<p>TEX186.</p>	<p>NEW ITEMS OF URGENT BUSINESS</p> <p><u>Local Authority Designated Officers Report April to December 2013</u></p> <p>The Committee considered a report by the LADO (Local Authority Designated Officer) which provided open information on the referrals of allegations against adults who work with children, including a profiling analysis of allegations made in the borough, comparative data and an update of the interventions and development work completed between April and December 2013. Having considered the details of the report the Committee questioned</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The thresholds in place • The presentation of the data as the number of allegations put forward to the LADO were small but when compiled into a percentage format could provide a misleading picture <p>The Committee felt that there was a need to understand the information behind the data with further analysis focussing on whether there were</p>	

MINUTES OF THE CHILDREN'S SAFEGUARDING POLICY AND PRACTICE ADVISORY COMMITTEE
THURSDAY, 23 JANUARY 2014

	<p>allegations against particular gender or particular age group ,and was there more than one allegation against a person?</p> <p>The total number of allegations made was 79 and the Committee questioned this number in comparison to other boroughs and also felt this number maybe too small given the total population in Haringey was over 250, 000.</p> <p>A question was asked by the Chair about young people’s understanding of the LADO process and how well they know who to go to as their first point of contact if they want to report abuse. The routes to the LADO were explained as well as the reminder given of the role of the LSCB which provides training to schools staff about how they take forward children’s and young people reported concerns . There is a named person at a school that children and young people can go to with concerns about abuse and maltreatment. The Chair continued to be concerned about the awareness among young people at school about whom they can go to especially if English is their second language.</p> <p>Agreed that there be a follow up report to Committee by the LADO</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Answering broader questions on the interaction with the LADO. • Identifying trends behind the data and reporting on this • Providing an assessment of the awareness of the LADO by checking procedures for reporting into the LADO and how effective these are • Provide some comparative data <p>To further inform this report back, agreed that referrals into the LADO are analysed and understanding reached on how an enquiry becomes an investigation and how it is decided that no further action is required by the LADO. It was further agreed that the 53 enquiries which did not meet the threshold for LADO investigation are also analysed and information provided to the Committee on why they did not meet the threshold for LADO investigation.</p> <p>The Committee also advised officers of the need to ensure the process was robust and detected false allegations as unproven claims could have a marked detrimental impact on the career and life of the person that was being investigated.</p> <p><u>Update on Children’s Services Staff Changes</u></p> <p>The Chair asked the Deputy Chief Executive to provide an update on the recent senior staff changes in the Children’s services and sought assurance that there was not an impact on the safeguarding services provided to children in the borough. The Deputy Chief Executive outlined the interim structure in place and the work being done to ensure that all staff in the service was fully aware of their reporting lines. This included ensuring communication about staff changes reached staff quickly and they were clear on who they needed to send information to and seek</p>	<p>AD QA</p> <p>AD QA</p>
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MINUTES OF THE CHILDREN'S SAFEGUARDING POLICY AND PRACTICE ADVISORY COMMITTEE
THURSDAY, 23 JANUARY 2014

	<p>necessary agreements from .The Director of Children’s Services(Acting) and Deputy Director for Schools and Learning were also visiting all Children’s service teams on a daily basis. The CE and Deputy CE were also holding information sessions with all Children’s staff to share information on changes quickly and in person.</p> <p>The Committee were advised that the delay in recruiting to a permanent Director of Children’s services was unavoidable and it would take around 6 months to recruit to this post . The appointed director would then need to appoint their management team. In the meantime, the interim structure was focussing on the core business of the service and ensuring that the day to day core business of the Children’s Service was meeting the needs of children. Although, there may be administrative changes in the names of managers, effort was being made to ensure that this did not impact on the daily activities of social workers and their line managers.</p> <p>It was further explained that Children’s service staff were all located on the 1st Floor at River Park House with the Acting Director as well as all the AD’s. They were visible, making both formal and informal contact with staff.</p>	
<p>TEX187.</p>	<p>EXCLUSION OF THE PRESS AND PUBLIC</p> <p>The Press and Public were excluded from the meeting for the following item.</p>	
<p>TEX188.</p>	<p>THE INDEPENDENT MEMBER'S QUALITATIVE AUDIT ON DECISIONS TO UNDERTAKE A SECTION 47 INVESTIGATION As per item 8</p>	
<p>TEX189.</p>	<p>NEW ITEMS OF EXEMPT URGENT BUSINESS</p> <p>None</p>	
<p>TEX190.</p>	<p>DATE OF THE NEXT MEETING</p> <p>Joint meeting with Corporate Parenting Committee on the 6th March 7.30pm.</p> <p>Next Children’s Safeguarding Policy and Practice Committee on Tuesday 01st April 2014.</p>	

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THURSDAY, 23 JANUARY 2014**

Cllr James Stewart

Chair