



Haringey Council

Agenda item:

Overview and Scrutiny

on 25th February 2008

Report Title: **CHILD PROTECTION—FEASIBILITY REPORT**

Report of: **Director of The Children and Young People's Service**

Wards(s) affected: **All**

Report for: **Information**

1. Purpose

1.1 This feasibility report on Child Protection was undertaken to allow the Overview and Scrutiny Committee to determine whether a full scrutiny review could be beneficial and add value to the services provided by the Children and Young People's Service.

2. Recommendations

- 2.1 That the Children and Young People's Service be commended for improving performance in this area.
- 2.2 That the work of the Local Safeguarding Children Board in monitoring and coordinating the work of all agencies in safeguarding children be noted.
- 2.3 In the light of the good performance in this area as recognised by the recent Annual Performance Assessment, and the existing reporting and monitoring arrangements both locally and nationally, the Committee agree that a full scrutiny review would not be beneficial or add value to the service at this time.

Report Authorised by:

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3. Local Government (Access to Information) Act 1985

Children Act 2004

Working Together to Safeguard Children 2006

All London Child Protection Procedures 2007

Joint Area Review 2006, Ofsted

Annual Performance Assessment 2007, Ofsted

4 Background

- 4.1 The Children Act 2004 marked a key legislative change in the way in which services were delivered to vulnerable children and families. The Act incorporated the recommendations contained in the Laming report of 2003 and sought to establish a more integrated framework for the delivery of services to vulnerable children. Amongst other provisions the Act laid down a requirement to appoint a Lead Member for Children's Services, and a Director of Children's Services and set a target for all Local Authorities to integrate services to children and young people which were formerly within Social Services and Education Departments.
- 4.2 Section 13 of the Children Act created Local Safeguarding Children Boards (LSCB) as statutory multi-agency bodies with a remit to co-ordinate work to safeguard children and ensure that it is carried out effectively; Sections 10 and 11 impose a duty to co-operate and a duty to safeguard and promote the welfare of children respectively on key statutory agencies working with children. Haringey Safeguarding Children Board was established in 2005 alongside the creation of the Children and Young People's Service.
- 4.3 The Act is supplemented by statutory guidance contained in a revised version of *Working Together to Safeguard Children* (2006). This prescribes among other things how agencies should work together to conduct effective assessments, and child protection investigations implement child protection plans, and undertake serious case reviews. The work of Haringey agencies is further guided by the child protection procedures developed for the whole of London following the Laming Inquiry. These have recently been expanded and updated to take account of legislative developments.

Haringey's Local Safeguarding Board and Services for Child Protection

- 5.1 In line with other Councils, Haringey is subject to a range of external inspections. Child Protection performance has always been inspected as part of the inspection of children's social care services a role previously undertaken by the Commission for Social Care Inspection and since April

2007 by Ofsted as part of the inspection of the Children and Young People's Service.

5.2 Haringey Children and Young People's Service was subject to a Joint Area Review (JAR) in 2006, achieving an overall score of 3,(Good); this report is publicly available on the Ofsted website. As part of the fieldwork undertaken inspectors look at case samples and interview both staff and service users, they also look at performance indicators and make judgements as to comparative performance. The JAR also included interviews with a wide range of partner agencies and included a focus on the LSCB as the multi agency body responsible for effective safeguarding practice across the authority.

5.3 The JAR made a judgement on the Stay Safe outcome of satisfactory (Grade 2). However they did identify the progress that had been made and areas of good practice:

“Child protection work is generally of a satisfactory standard; most performance indicators are now in line with those in comparator authorities. This reflects good and sustained improvements in practice and management since 2001 when practice was poor. All children on the child protection register have an allocated social worker and cases are reviewed within timescales. Effective multi-agency working has supported a managed reduction in numbers on the child protection register. Staff are well managed and supported to carry out their roles, and improvement in the quality of social work practice in care proceedings has been recognised by local courts. General and specialist child protection training for all relevant staff, including voluntary sector partners is very good, is valued by staff and improves the quality of child protection work.”

5.4 Haringey's LSCB and its sub groups incorporate a wide range of partners from both statutory and voluntary agencies, including the PCT, the Mental Health Trust, Metropolitan Police, Adult Social Care, Probation, Housing, Connexions, Schools, and representatives from a number of voluntary organisations in addition to the Children and Young People's Service.

5.5 The LSCB has a quality assurance function which it exercises through its quality assurance sub group. As part of its role the LSCB has also conducted audits of how well partner agencies are implementing S11 of the Children Act 2004. The training sub group of the LSCB is responsible for the design and delivery of multi agency child protection training and the policy and procedures sub group produces additional protocols and guidance to aid joint working locally, examples include templates for child protection procedures for use by voluntary organisations and faith groups, joint protocols with adults services around mental health and learning disabilities, and practice guidance for agencies on the safe recruitment and selection of staff.

5.6 The JAR judged the LSCB to be good and very good in some areas.

“The LSCB..... has established an ambitious programme and good ownership of the wider safeguarding agenda with procedures in place to review serious incidents. A newly integrated child protection unit, composed of child protection advisers from social care and education, supports the LSCB and multi-agency working. Links between the LSCB and the voluntary sector are good and developing further. The LSCB has begun to take forward the “Staying Safe” priorities within the Children and Young People’s Strategic Plan and to make an impact on the wider safeguarding agenda, for example in relation to Project Violet, a Metropolitan Police-led operation to tackle faith-based abuse”.

5.7 The Annual Performance Assessment carried out by Ofsted in 2007 rated the performance of the Children and Young People’s Service against five outcomes: be healthy, stay safe, achieve economic wellbeing, enjoy and achieve, and make a positive contribution. Performance overall was rated as 3 (Good). The Stay Safe outcome previously judged to be satisfactory had improved between the JAR and APA and was judged to be good.

” Good action has been taken to address these recommendations (of the JAR) and there have been improvements in all aspects of social care provision for children..... Referral and assessment arrangements have been redesigned and one borough-wide service now ensures consistency. Timescales for completing initial assessments have improved and are now better than statistical neighbours and nationally. Numbers of re-referrals have reduced and are broadly in line with national figures and those of statistical neighbours. Timescales for completion of core assessments have also improved significantly and were acceptable for 2006/7 with local data showing further improvement since.”

5.8 Members receive reports on the work of the LSCB and on the performance of Children’s Social Care on a regular basis. The Children and Young People’s Consultative Committee chaired by the lead member for Children meets every six weeks. The committee receives a performance report at each meeting which includes child protection performance indicators and shows current performance against a number of key indicators and comparison with statistical neighbours. The committee also receives an annual report on the work of the LSCB, additional reports are also provided on related topics at the request of members

5.9 All councils submit a range of data relating to children’s social care annually to Ofsted and, in addition, report performance against 20 national indicators as part of the performance assessment framework. Ofsted uses this comparative information in forming its assessments of individual council performance. Performance data is measured and reported against both the England average and statistical neighbours.

5.10 In 2006/07, Haringey's performance against child protection indicators compares well with England and with statistical neighbours, for example:

- 77% of Initial Assessments were completed within timescale (7 days) in 2006/07 compared with a rate of 68% for statistical neighbours. Performance against this indicator has continued to improve with 90.5% of assessments completed within timescale between April and December 2007;
- 71% of Core Assessments were completed within timescale (35 days) in 06/07 this is a PAF (Performance Assessment Framework) indicator this was a significant improvement on the 05/06 performance of 58% and meant that we moved up a performance banding in line with statistical neighbour performance of 79%. Performance has continued to improve and as at December 2007, 84% of Core Assessments had been completed in timescale;
- All children on the child protection register had an allocated social worker in 2005/06 and in 2006/07, this performance has continued throughout 2007;
- 100% of children on the Child Protection register whose cases should have been reviewed in the year were reviewed in timescale in 2006/07. This is a PAF indicator and a key threshold indicator, and places Haringey within the top performance banding, this performance has been maintained throughout 2007.