

# **SAFEGUARDING SUB (COMMUNITY & CHILDREN'S SERVICES) COMMITTEE**

**Monday, 7 February 2022**

**Minutes of the meeting at 2.00 pm**

## **Present**

### **Members:**

Ruby Sayed (Chairman)	Marianne Fredericks
Randall Anderson (Deputy Chairman)	Susan Pearson
Mary Durcan	Deputy Elizabeth Rogula
Helen Fentimen	

### **Officers:**

Sharon Cushnie	- Community and Children's Services
Pat Dixon	- Community and Children's Services Department
Rachel Talmage	- Community and Children's Services
Chris Pelham	- Community and Children's Services
Teresa Shortland	- Community and Children's Services
Ellie Ward	- Community and Children's Services Department
Julie Mayer	- Town Clerk's Department
Robert Wood	- Community & Children's Services
Kirstie Hilton	- Department of Community & Children's Services

## **1. APOLOGIES**

There were no apologies.

## **2. MEMBERS' DECLARATIONS UNDER THE CODE OF CONDUCT IN RESPECT OF ITEMS ON THE AGENDA**

There were no declarations.

## **3. MINUTES**

RESOLVED, that – the minutes of the meeting held on 4<sup>th</sup> November 2021 be approved, subject to an amendment under Item 8 (Adult Skills Education and Apprenticeship Service) stating that all tutors 'must have at least a Level 2 Safeguarding Certificate'; and this should not be 'assumed' as stated in the draft minutes.

## **4. CITY & HACKNEY SAFEGUARDING CHILDREN PARTNERSHIP (CHSCP) - ANNUAL REPORT 2020/21**

The Sub Committee received the City and Hackney Safeguarding Children Partnership Annual Report for 2020/21, which reported on activity between 1st April 2020 and 31st March 2021. Members noted the change in structure from previous reports, with a stronger focus on evidence, impact, assurance and learning; making it easier to draw on areas which are tested in respect of local safeguarding.

RESOLVED, that – the report be noted.

5. **CHSCP UPDATE RE SEXUAL ABUSE IN SCHOOLS AND COLLEGES**

The Sub Committee received a report of the City and Hackney Safeguarding Children Partnership which updated Members on the work being undertaken in response to Ofsted's report on sexual abuse and harassment in schools and colleges; published in June 2020. Members noted that the CHSCP has been working with partners and schools to address the learning from the report.

During the discussion, the following points were noted:

- a) The death of Sarah Everard had resulted in a much stronger focus on violence against women and girls (VAWG).
- b) Victims of harassment and abuse can post testimonials on the '*Everyone's Invited*' website, which currently has 60,000 posts, many from schools and colleges. Ofsted had made it clear that Headteachers should take an active position, even if there are no references on the website, and must not assume that it has never been an issue.
- c) The Local Authority Designated Officer (LADO) met with Headteachers and, whilst there are currently no significant concerns, had found them to be very pro-active in training, raising awareness and gaining feedback. An officer from Transport for London had spoken to the Girls' School about sexual harassment on public transport and confidential help is available. The LADO also works closely with the Public Protection Team and the Education Safeguarding Forum.
- d) A joint project with the Community Safety Team, on tackling domestic violence, had been piloted in one school and, due to its success, it would be expanded into all schools, focussing on those with special educational needs and disability (SEND) who might be more vulnerable. Additionally, the SEND Advisor has visited all schools.
- e) Safeguarding partners focus on social media and technology, as they are accelerants for harassment, together with peer-on-peer abuse and cyber bullying. The City Corporation has been actively promoting the 'Safer Schools App', which was launched after the first lockdown. The app contains information about staying safe on line and how adults can be alert to the risks.
- f) The Education Safeguarding Forum was originally set up for City of London Corporation Schools but now includes all City-sponsored Academies and education providers in the Square Mile. Schools in Hackney and Southwark have been invited to join, notwithstanding their own local authority statutory duties. This report is due to be presented to the next Education Safeguarding Forum, with feedback from today's meeting.

- g) Students over 18 in City accommodation are covered by the same safeguarding arrangements which apply to all adults living in the City. Young people (under 18) living in the City, but educated outside, are covered by the respective local authorities and the City Corporation works closely with them.
- h) The Education Welfare Officer visits schools every term to investigate cases of persistent absence and local authority or City Corporation referrals.
- i) There is an expectation within the Safeguarding Partnership that all schools are a 'relevant agency' and have a statutory duty to co-operate with local arrangements. When the partnership was launched, there was a 6-month initial period followed by the pandemic, which might have interrupted embedding. Officers accepted that there might be more work needed to strengthen understanding and this would be raised at the next Education Safeguarding Forum.

RESOLVED, that – the report be noted.

#### 6. **CHILDREN'S SOCIAL CARE AND EARLY HELP SERVICE DEVELOPMENT PLAN UPDATE**

The Sub Committee received a report of the Director of Community and Children's Services on the work of the Children's Social Care and Early Help Service, which provided an update on the current position in respect of staffing activity and the impact on children and their families.

Members noted that management capacity had been increased in response to the rise in the number of unaccompanied asylum seeking children and, once the Target Operating Model had been implemented, there would be more social workers in post. A Member commented on the City's rigorous fostering assessment criteria, and it was noted that many looked after children, including unaccompanied asylum seekers, develop lifelong relationships with their foster carers.

RESOLVED, that – the report be noted

#### 7. **PRACTICE ASSURANCE STOCKTAKE CHILDREN'S SOCIAL CARE**

The Sub Committee received a report of the Director of Community and Children's Services in respect of a review to evaluate the quality and impact of practice, against the findings and recommendations from the last Ofsted Inspection for Children's Services in March 2020. The report summarised the findings and the steps taken in relation to the recommendations.

The LADO provided the following update since the agenda had been despatched.

- a) Regulation 44 visits take place when an Independent Person visits a children's residential home, on a monthly basis, in order to check a child's safety and wellbeing.
- b) Since the Audit in October 2021, all Regulation 44 (Reg 44) documents are shared with Commissioning and placed on the young person's file. Staff are fully aware of the importance of the information contained on the Reg 44. One of the social worker students in Community and Children's Services has prepared a presentation on Reg 44 for the next team meeting.
- c) No young person under the age of 16 is placed in semi-independent provision and, since December 2021, placements have been sourced through the Commissioning Alliance, which gives additional quality assurance.
- d) Quality Assurance (QA) visits to semi-independent providers have been taking place since 2019. During the pandemic, the visits took place virtually and usually involved someone from Commissioning and a Children's Social Care Manager. A framework and rota for managers and senior leadership has been developed for future QA visits.
- e) In respect of unregulated placements, Ofsted will be registering providers in April 2023, and standards will become mandatory from Autumn 2023. Ofsted will pilot inspections during 2023, with the first inspections starting in April 2024.

In response to questions, Members noted that the City Corporation had joined a London Consortium Portal to obtain semi-independent service providers and any not known to the City are quality assured. During the 2020 Inspection, Ofsted commended the City's QA process for being over and above what they would expect. Members also noted that social workers had attended in person throughout the pandemic and, in the event of a contention, then a team manager would also attend.

RESOLVED, that – the report be noted.

## 8. **EDUCATION AND SAFEGUARDING REPORT**

The Sub Committee received a report of the Director of Community and Children's Services which provided an update on the Education and Early Years' Service's work over the past year. Members noted an update since the despatch of the agenda in that all 16 and 17 year olds had been given places on accredited programmes.

During the discussion, the following points were noted:

- a) The Education welfare service would be covered in more depth in the next report. There is a new provision at Bishopsgate/Liverpool St which has been invited to the Education Safeguarding Forum.

- b) The Vulnerable Children list includes all children known to the Social Care Team, those who are home educated, those at risk of missing education and Afghan children with safeguarding concerns. There used to be 40—50 in the City’s cohort but this was expected to increase, in line with government guidelines.
- c) School in Afghanistan starts at 7 years and the Early Years Team had secured nursery and reception placements, despite the late notice, and health visitors had been available to meet immediate needs. All parents had been offered free entitlement to childcare, but some prefer not to take this up for cultural reasons. The Committee commended the team’s sterling work in securing 220 school places in 6 weeks, noting that the population of school-age children in the City had increased by 70% last August.
- d) A playroom was opened for women and children, within days of their arrival, and this also served as a community focal point.
- e) Most of the children had settled in very well and were enjoying school. Officers were starting to work directly with schools in respect of those children who might need SEN support. Parents were also becoming self-sufficient in dealing directly with the schools.
- f) The Children’s Centre are offering English lessons at their drop in centres, with creche facilities. Translators are available twice a week, together with an Early Help Worker, and the service is available on a 1-1 basis when parents need to speak to health workers and schools etc.

Officers were commended for their hard work in helping our Afghan guests, within the limited resources and infrastructure available, and Members commended an exemplar of partnership working.

RESOLVED, that – the report be noted.

9. **STRENGTHENING FAMILIES, STRENGTHENING COMMUNITIES - PILOT PARENTING PROGRAMME**

The Sub Committee received a report of the Director, Community and Children’s Services, which provided a summary of the Strengthening Families, Strengthening Communities (SFSC) Pilot Parenting Programme delivered by the Early Help Service and the Adult Skills Education Service (ASES). Members noted that, out of 7 parents, 3 had found part time employment by the end of the programme.

RESOLVED, that – the report be noted.

10. **SPECIAL EDUCATIONAL NEEDS AND DISABILITY (SEND) - UPDATE REPORT**

The Sub Committee received a report of the Director of Community and Children’s Services in respect of the work underway in supporting the needs and development of children and young people with SEND.

During the discussion, the following points were noted:

- a) Up to date figures on children and young people on SEND support/care plans can be provided to Members, on request.
- b) The recently appointed medical and clinical officers working with SEND cases are seeing progress in needs analysis.
- c) The thresholds for all services are different and can be challenging; given the different entitlements available at each age group, and a Task and Finish Group had been set up to cover 0-25 years. Housing are now agreeing to prioritise looked-after children and officers would like to see this extended into apprenticeships.
- d) Some children with SEND plans serve on the Youth Parliament, which supports the SEND Strategy objective of encouraging engagement in local communities and towards achieving good life outcomes.
- e) There will be one more meeting of the Task and Finish Group, ahead of more information being published. SEND families also have access to independent advice via the parent/carer forum.

RESOLVED, that – the report be noted.

*At 15.55 Members agreed to extend the meeting by 10 minutes to conclude the business on the agenda.*

**11. CHILDREN AND FAMILIES SERVICE PERFORMANCE - MONTH 6 2021/22 (SEPTEMBER 2021)**

The Sub Committee received a report of the Director of Community and Children's Services in respect of performance across the Children and Families Service. Members noted that more detail was available in the non-public appendices at agenda item 17.

In response to a question about young asylum seekers, officers had been very pro-active in setting up on-line Home Office interviews, and 15 out of 20 now have permanent immigration status. Members asked if future reports could include the number of care leavers with open immigration status.

RESOLVED, that – the report be noted.

**12. PROVISION FOR YOUNG PEOPLE IN THE CITY OF LONDON**

The Sub Committee received a report of the Director of Community and Children's Services, which highlighted universal youth and play provision in the City of London. The report set out the services, aims, providers, quarter three (Q3) highlights, and the opportunities identified for improvement. Members noted that Portsoken data related to Quarter 2, as there had been a temporary gap in provision at Quarter 3 due to a change in provider. The officer gave

assurance that the service is now being delivered weekly from the new community centre, and as stated in the report.

During the discussion on this item, the following points were noted:

- a) The high levels of poverty in Portsoken, together with obesity and diabetes related health problems. In the longer term, investment in health benefits would result in a saving, as many residents have no access to affordable gyms or sports facilities, and the school in Portsoken no longer has access to St Georges Swimming Pool. The community also experiences language barriers and a lack of transport facilities to the West of the City. Officers noted the cultural sensitivities, in respect of a lack of provision of women-only swimming sessions, and Members were concerned that children might not be learning to swim. Whilst school swimming programmes are part of the review, officers agreed to look at cross-borough opportunities.
- b) A new service is being developed and consultation had identified priority areas, such as the provision of football, noting that previous attempts had failed due to the City Corporation not having a competitive youth football team or league. The City's Sports Development and Youth Service Review had specified the establishment of a club, noting that this would need a targeted piece of work with the Football Association.
- c) There is currently a good offer at the Golden Lane Leisure Centre, but the service provider does not have facilities in the East of the City. Therefore, the City Corporation will need to work with its neighbouring boroughs to expand their provisions.
- d) A large number of City school children attend the Youth City Forum and London Youth Games, as they have pre-prepared teams, but there is still a lack of City resident engagement. Both Prospects and Fusion are aware of this and are working to increase engagement. This will be monitored as part of the contract.
- e) The Youth Forum is currently in the process of running elections, and the Member of UK Youth Parliament, or the Deputy Member of UK Youth Parliament will be a city resident. There will also be a social media campaign.
- f) Work is underway with the Communications Team, to ensure accessibility across all languages, noting the new Afghan community in the City, with 300 children under 16.
- g) The Sub Committee will receive a further report addressing the issues raised at this Sub Committee meeting and filling the gaps in provision. The Chair asked that, if there are initiatives that can be implemented based on the discussions at today's meeting, they should go ahead before the report is presented.

h) The SEND Sports Project was launched in November 21, at the Golden Lane Sports Centre, working in partnership with Fusion. The project secured £5000 of funding for swimming, football and gym sessions until March 2022.

RESOLVED, that – the report be noted.

**13. QUESTIONS OF MATTERS RELATING TO THE WORK OF THE SUB-COMMITTEE**

Members noted that the Serious Case Review in respect of ‘Arthur’ was not yet available, but the Team looked at all high profile cases as soon as possible. Officers gave assurance of the City Corporation’s strong core safeguarding practices, and it was noted that children are safer when the risks are held by a number of different parties.

**14. ANY OTHER BUSINESS THE CHAIRMAN CONSIDERS URGENT**

The Chair advised that a long-standing vacancy on the Sub Committee would be offered to the wider Court of Common Council, as had been the case with other Community and Children’s Services Sub Committees.

Officers advised that the Home Office were trying to move the Afghan guests into permanent housing, but this would not happen at pace, due to the lack of housing resources. However, the position was being actively lobbied and the GLA had input.

**15. EXCLUSION OF THE PUBLIC**

**RESOLVED**, that – under Section 100(A) of the Local Government Act 1972, the public be excluded from the meeting for the following items on the grounds that they involve the likely disclosure of exempt information as defined in Part I of the Schedule 12A of the Local Government Act.

<b>Items</b>	<b>Paragraphs</b>
16-19	1,2 & 3

**16. NON-PUBLIC MINUTES**

RESOLVED, that – the public minutes and non-public summary of the meeting held on 4th November 2021 be approved.

**17. CHILDREN AND FAMILIES SERVICE PERFORMANCE - MONTH 6 2021/22 (SEPTEMBER 2021) - NON PUBLIC APPENDICES (1 AND 2)**

Members received a non-public appendix in respect of agenda item 11.

**18. NON-PUBLIC QUESTIONS ON MATTERS RELATING TO THE WORK OF THE SUB-COMMITTEE**

Members noted that some young people, not in employment or educational training, (NEETs) will not be able to study or work due to core health reasons which need to be addressed first. Furthermore, if they do not have immigration status, then they are not permitted to study, work or volunteer. Members noted that 2 more NEETS had found employment since this report had been published.

19. **ANY OTHER BUSINESS THAT THE CHAIRMAN CONSIDERS URGENT AND WHICH THE SUB-COMMITTEE AGREE SHOULD BE CONSIDERED WHILST THE PUBLIC ARE EXCLUDED**

There were no items.

**The meeting closed at time not specified**

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Chairman

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