

SAFEGUARDING SUB (COMMUNITY & CHILDREN'S SERVICES) COMMITTEE

Thursday, 26 January 2017

Minutes of the meeting of the Safeguarding Sub (Community & Children's Services)
Committee held at Guildhall on Thursday, 26 January 2017 at 1.45 pm

Present

Members:

Gareth Moore (Chairman)
Deputy Elizabeth Rogula (Deputy
Chairman)
Randall Anderson

Marianne Fredericks
Professor John Lumley
Deputy Joyce Nash

In Attendance

Jim Gable	-	City and Hackney Safeguarding Board
Rory McCallum	-	City and Hackney Safeguarding Board

Officers:

Chris Pelham	-	Community and Children's Services
Poppy Middlemiss	-	Community and Children's Services
Elizabeth Malton	-	Community and Children's Services
Rachel Green	-	Community and Children's Services
Pip Hesketh	-	Community and Children's Services
Sham Kidane	-	Community and Children's Services
Julie Mayer	-	Town Clerk's Department

1. APOLOGIES

Apologies were received from Dhruv Patel.

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

There were no declarations.

3. MINUTES

The public minutes and non-public summary of the meeting held on 17th November 2016 were approved.

4. OFSTED IMPROVEMENT PLAN

The Sub Committee received a report of the Director of Community and Children's Services in respect of the Ofsted improvement plan.

Are all the actions that are due in January, on track?

Following the recent Ofsted Inspection, an action plan was implemented, which included additional voluntary actions. The Ofsted plan was distinct and separate from the next agenda item (Service Improvement Plan), so that inspectors could easily identify the Ofsted actions. The Service Improvement Plan covered the annual plans which appeared on today's agenda. Officers confirmed that all actions were on track, with January's complete and February's to complete during the first week of February.

Will future versions of the plan have the Red, Amber or Green section completed?

Yes, the same RAG ratings will be used.

RESOLVED, that – the report be noted.

5. SERVICE IMPROVEMENT PLAN

The Sub Committee received a report of the Director of Community and Children's Services in respect of the Service Improvement Plan.

How does the plan differ to the Ofsted Action Plan?

As explained in the earlier agenda item, this report was more inclusive and included all the annual reports on this agenda.

What are the 3 top risks you see for your service in not being able to maintain the high level of quality as highlighted by Ofsted?

There was substantial evidence in support of unresolved childhood issues leading to crises later in life; i.e. drug and alcohol dependency, crime and poor educational employment prospects. Therefore, if outcomes were poor, then needs would go unmet.

A detailed and clear improvement plan. What steps are being taken to address the issues regarding care leavers and loneliness?

Leaver care had been extended to mid-late 20's and mentoring in building friendships and relationships was offered, along with structured leisure activities and shared celebrations. During the Festive Season, young people and adults were invited to Christmas lunches.

It had been evidenced that building child resilience was more effective if mentoring was offered by one person and the service aimed to provide this. Officers had submitted a bid for funding to train care leavers to be mentors for other care leavers. This work was significant as children were coming into care later and Members noted the links to the Domestic Abuse Report, which appeared later on this agenda.

In response to a further question about the Common Assessment Framework, Members noted that partners were being actively encouraged to complete this and a co-location worker was available to assist them. The arrangements were due to be reviewed on 17 March 2017.

In concluding, the Chairman and Members commended this work and were very keen to seek new opportunities and partnerships and to see processes re-evaluated.

RESOLVED, that – the report be noted.

6. CITY AND HACKNEY SAFEGUARDING CHILDREN BOARD

The Sub Committee received a report of the Director of Community and Children's Services in respect of the Annual Safeguarding Report.

The Independent Chairman of the City & Hackney Safeguarding Children Board was very pleased to report on their recent Outstanding Ofsted Inspection, which he attributed to a collective effort and the professional scrutiny of all partners. The Chairman formally recorded his thanks to Mr Rory McCullum, Professional Advisor to the Board, and thanked the Lay Members for their contributions. Members endorsed this and felt that no changes to current processes and procures were required. However, they also accepted the imminent change in Leadership, following the resignation of the previous Director of Community and Children's Services and therefore it was crucial to maintain this momentum. Members also agreed that safeguarding should be seen in the context of the quality of care across various needs and did not necessarily equal the number of children cared for.

In response to questions, the following points were noted:

The Department of Community and Children's Service took succession planning very seriously and had robust recruitment strategies in place, which were well placed to respond the national changes. Members would receive a report later in the year setting out these plans.

The Community and Children's Services Department valued the challenge and support of the Board and Members commended an excellent partnership. The important work with the Health and Wellbeing Board was also noted.

Community and Children's officers agreed to meet with the Board to discuss their aspirations, i.e. a Safeguarding Intelligence Unit across young people and adults, and to present a report to a later meeting, setting out priorities, measurable outcomes and budgetary requirements.

RESOLVED, that – the report be noted.

7. INDEPENDENT REVIEWING OFFICER (IRO) ANNUAL REPORT 2015/2016

The Sub Committee received a report of the Director of Community and Children's Services in respect of the IRO Annual Report (2015/16).

Report is very positive and demonstrates clearly the impact on the role for our Looked After Children. The report on page 21 indicates feedback that reviews might sometimes be too long. How do you ensure that the views of our Looked After Children are fully expressed and considered in terms of the quality of the care they receive? Do any Chair their own reviews?

This was the first year for the IRO service coming back in-house. Children had independent access to advocacy and could chair their own reviews and when children asked for an independent review, this was accommodated.

The Independent Review Officer worked closely with the Designated Nurse and Virtual Head Teacher and they met 3 times a year. Members noted the challenges with high numbers of unaccompanied children and the City of London's IRO participated in Pan London Meetings. The IRO had also recommended that the next conference should focus on older children in care. Furthermore, the City of London Corporation would host the next Annual London Conference.

The IRO advised that the Service was very skilled in immigration support and worked closely with the Home Office to ensure that all clients received appropriate legal advice. In respect of the length of some reviews, this could be attributed to the number of young people coming into care in the City; i.e. with no history and language difficulties. The City of London Corporation had an established practitioner group and more care planning, which were cutting review times.

How does the IRO ensure that the recommendations in section 7 are being implemented?

The recommendations have been incorporated into the Service Improvement Plan and are tracked for progress monthly at Children's Senior Management Team and monitored quarterly via the Service Improvement Board. The IRO for the City of London Corporation valued her proximity to the team, and the value this has added, since the service' return in-house was recognised and commended by Ofsted during their inspection. She emphasised that the role was completely independent and IROs did not write care plans or take decisions. In extreme cases, an IRO could instigate a legal challenge to an authority and, to support this, the City of London Corporation has an arrangement with Islington Council to provide the IRO independent legal advice in the event of dispute resolution.

RESOLVED, that – the report be noted.

8. EARLY YEARS SAFEGUARDING REPORT 2016

The Sub Committee received a report of the Director of Community and Children's Services in respect of the Early Years Safeguarding Audits.

EARLY YEARS SAFEGUARDING AUDITS:

Given the performance levels of these settings, what support role will the LA be playing in the next 12 months?

Audits were undertaken in a highly supportive way and those areas with the greatest challenges worked the hardest. There had been one red rating, due to a change in a staff Member, which had since been rectified. There had been a recent permanent staff appointment in Early Years, which was not a statutory obligation but the Service recognised the importance of early care in the prevention of difficulties in later life.

RESOLVED, that – the report be noted.

9. CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE ANNUAL CONSULTATION 2016

The Sub Committee received a report of the Director of Community and Children's Services in respect of the 2016 Annual Consultation.

Is there any evidence that the feedback from the survey has / will impact on our service delivery?

Generally, children were very happy with their social workers. Some areas of concern in 2015 had been resolved with the introduction of the Virtual Head and the IRO and improved awareness of advocacy and help for immigrants. As further development areas arose, they were being addressed and the Service continued to challenge itself. Officers were working with the Red Cross to help young immigrants track their parents, which could be traumatic and challenging.

Do we know how these figures compare to other areas?

This had been a very elaborate survey conducted via email, post, telephone and home visits; which was not offered by many other authorities. 'Action for Children' worked with many of the City of London's neighbouring authorities and were very impressed with the high level of satisfaction expressed by the children and young people that we work with.

RESOLVED, that – the report be noted.

10. CORPORATE PARENTING ANNUAL REPORT

The Sub Committee received a report of the Director of Community and Children's Services in respect of the Corporate Parenting Annual Report.

Given para 12 set out development areas for 2016- can you comment on if they have been achieved?

Officers confirmed that all development areas had been achieved and referred Members to the Service Improvement Plan at agenda item 5.

RESOLVED, that – the report be noted.

11. SAFEGUARDING CHILDREN FROM THE EXPERIENCE OF DOMESTIC ABUSE

The Sub Committee received a report of the Director of Community and Children's Services in respect of a Domestic Abuse Strategy for Children.

How does the department work with families who don't want to accept the offer of support if there are no child protection concerns?

Early help was offered in partnership with the Voluntary Sector and the Vulnerable Victims Advocate Service, which was part of the City of London Police. Further support was offered in schools, which can make referrals to more intensive programmes. Awareness of domestic abuse was core to social workers' training and domestic abuse specialists within teams help to develop these tools. Evidence suggested an increased risk in child exploitation if there were no 'safe places' at home; making this work extremely valuable.

RESOLVED, that – the report be noted.

12. UPDATE ON THE WORK ON CHILDREN MISSING EDUCATION

The Sub Committee received a report of the Director of Community and Children's Services which provided an update on children missing education.

What impact has the legislative change in Sept 2016 regarding school reporting requirements had in the past 6 months?

Since September 2016, the Independent Sector have been obliged to report to the Local Authority on non-standard transitions. However, the Service had been working with the City of London's Independent Schools before this and had access to the full school roles across 42 post codes. It was unusual for a local authority to have such a good relationship with Independent Schools and the City of London Corporation was demonstrating best practice.

Was the autumn term target of 100 children identified, met?

Last year the Service mapped the location of all children across 400 schools. However, there would always be some that by-passed the system and therefore 2/3^{rds} of the children were found. Unfortunately, this ambitious target was not achieved but a new database had been started and the less obvious places were being checked. There were further challenges in that not all children participated in early years' provision but checking procedures included nannies and informal playgroups. Furthermore, a very small number of children educated in the City were also City residents and this added to the challenges.

Members were concerned at some lack of joined up working across safeguarding and education generally and suggested that information sharing across nurseries, schools and doctors could be improved. Officers advised that the Service had signed up to the DfE's national system but this could only identify numbers and not names. Members also noted that registration of free books would assist tracking but it could take a while to see a significant improvement.

RESOLVED, that – the report be noted.

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

There were no questions.

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

There were no items.

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 1 of the Schedule 12A of the Local Government Act.

Item	Paragraphs
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16 – 20	1 & 2
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16. **NON-PUBLIC MINUTES**

The non-public minutes of the meeting held on 17 November 2016 were approved.

17. **FAMILY FEEDBACK ON CHILDREN AND FAMILIES SERVICE**

The Sub Committee received a report of the Director of Community and Children's Services in respect of Family Feedback on the Children and Families Service.

18. **CHILDREN'S SAFEGUARDING REPORT FOR QUARTER 2**

The Sub Committee received a report of the Director of Community and Children's Services in respect of the Children's Performance Report for Quarter 2.

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

Officers agreed to provide a report to Members on the Service's reliance on Outside Bodies and Agencies.

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

There were no items.

The meeting ended at 15:40

Chairman

Contact Officer: Julie Mayer
tel. no.: 020 7332 1410
julie.mayer@cityoflondon.gov.uk