

Subject: Effectiveness of Safeguarding – Stock Take
Date of Meeting: 19 January 2009
Report of: Director of Children's Services
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Key Decision: No
Wards Affected: All

FOR GENERAL RELEASE

1. SUMMARY AND POLICY CONTEXT:

- 1.1 Following events in the London Borough of Haringey (the Baby P. case) all Local Authorities and NHS organisations are required to take stock of the effectiveness of safeguarding practice in their areas including a review of assurance arrangements at Board level.
- 1.2 This report provides the context for a further report, which, because of the timescales for this work, will be tabled at the Children and Young People's Trust (CYPT) Board on January 19th 2009.
- 1.3 A similar report will be taken to the PCT Integrated Governance Board on January 19, 2009.

2. RECOMMENDATIONS:

- 2.1 That the CYPT Board notes the content of this report and agrees to consider a further report to be tabled at the meeting on January 19, 2009.

3. BACKGROUND INFORMATION:

- 3.1. Chronology of key events:

November 12th 2008:

- Ed Balls, Secretary of State for Children, Schools and Families received the Serious Case Review Overview Report from Haringey Council in respect of the Baby P. Case and immediately initiated an urgent inspection of safeguarding in Haringey by Ofsted, the Healthcare Commission and the Chief Inspector of Constabulary

November 17th 2008:

- The Secretary of State for Children, Schools and Families and Beverly Hughes, Minister of State for Children, Young People and Families asked Lord Laming to prepare an independent report on progress implementing

effective arrangements for safeguarding children and specifically to make recommendations to improve the effectiveness of local children's Safeguarding Boards (LSCBs) and the quality, consistency and impact of Serious Case Reviews.

December 1st 2008:

- Publication of Joint Area Review of Haringey services for children and young people with particular reference to safeguarding
- Letter from the Secretary of State to all Directors of Children's Services and Lead Members for Children's Services requiring them to 'take stock of the effectiveness of safeguarding practice in their own areas'
- Statement by Alan Johnson the Secretary of State for Health announcing the Healthcare Commission's 'swift review' of Health Board assurance arrangements for safeguarding
- Letter from David Nicholson NHS Chief Executive to ensure every NHS organisation actively considers the issues raised by Ofsted, and the further action they need to take
- Publication of the letter from Lord Laming to the Secretary of State for Children, Schools and Families recommending that the government should not undertake a Public Inquiry into the Haringey case but should, instead, recognise the 'robustness of the foundation on which current children's services are based' and focus on ensuring that the system is fully implemented across the country and on improving the effectiveness of Serious Case Reviews
- Publication by Ofsted's report 'Learning lessons, taking action' evaluating serious case reviews in the year to March 2008
- Publication of government's response to the Joint Chief Inspectors' Report July 2008 accepting all of the safeguarding recommendations

December 8th 2008:

- Letter from Ofsted to all Local Authority Chief Executives seeking assurance of the accuracy of the data submitted for the Annual Performance Assessment (APA) process in 2008 so that APA reports could be published on December 17th 2008.

December 9th 2008:

- Loughborough University issued questionnaires to survey data on membership of LSCBs nationally and to obtain the views of LSCB chairs on the work of LSCBs

December 16th 2008:

- Letter from Beverly Hughes, Minister of State for Children, Young People and Families detailing the action to be taken by any LSCB responsible for a Serious Case Review judged by Ofsted to be inadequate.

December 23rd 2008:

- Letter from the Healthcare Commission outlining the Safeguarding Children Review announced on December 1st

3.2. In his letter of December 1st 2008 the Secretary of State for Children, Schools and Families letter of December 1st said;

‘The Ofsted report on Haringey now provides a clear and immediate challenge against which I would like (these) assessments carried out’

In particular Ofsted have identified:

- Significant weaknesses in safeguarding and child protection procedures and practice in Haringey
- Inadequate leadership and management of safeguarding by the local authority and partner agencies
- Poor gathering, recording and sharing of information
- A failure to identify those children and young people at immediate risk of harm
- Poor child protection plans
- Agencies working in isolation from one another and without any effective coordination; and
- A failure to consult with children in some cases; and in others where a child has not been seen alone, there is limited evidence of addressing the reasons for this and enabling the child’s voice to be heard.

3.3. In his statement on December 1st 2008 the Secretary of State for Health said that the Joint Area Review:

‘..highlights clear failures in the local NHS organisations to communicate properly and share information and expertise. These failures are unacceptable. The protection of vulnerable children requires the very highest levels of performance. We urgently need to learn the lessons of this appalling case.’

3.4 These concerns were echoed by the letter on December 1st from David Nicholson NHS Chief Executive. In their letter of 23rd of December 2008 to all NHS organisations the Healthcare Commission gave preliminary guidance about the safeguarding children review which will look at:

‘..board assurance, around child protection systems, including governance arrangements, around training and staffing, and around arrangements for health organisations to work in partnership with others to safeguard children.’

4. CONSULTATION

4.1 This report has been produced in consultation with senior managers in the CYPT and the PCT.

5. FINANCIAL & OTHER IMPLICATIONS:

Financial Implications:

5.1 Although there are no financial implications directly arising from this report any actions recommended in the subsequent report to be tabled on the 19th will have to be fully costed and the financial impact and available resources identified.

Finance Officer Consulted: David Ellis

Date: 06/01/2009

Legal Implications:

- 5.2 This report sets out the context for reviewing safeguarding practice, as required by the Secretary of State following events in the London Borough of Haringey.

There are no legal implications which arise from this report but there may be in the further report which will set out what work will be undertaken as part of the review in Brighton and Hove.

Lawyer Consulted: Hilary Priestley

Date: 06/01/09

Equalities Implications:

- 5.3 Statutory Guidance (Working Together 2006) and local procedures (Pan Sussex Child Protection Procedures) take full account of the equalities issues in ensuring the safeguarding of all children, especially those from vulnerable or marginalized groups.

Sustainability Implications:

- 5.4 There are no immediate sustainability implications.

Crime & Disorder Implications:

- 5.5 There are no immediate Crime & Disorder implications.

Risk & Opportunity Management Implications:

- 5.6 Effective management of risk is a central feature of safeguarding children and is at the heart of this report and the further report, which will be tabled at the board meeting on January 19th 2009.

Corporate / Citywide Implications:

- 5.7 Events in the London Borough of Haringey following the Joint Area Review of children's services demonstrate that the effectiveness of safeguarding children arrangements have very significant implications for the city council and all of its partners.

6. EVALUATION OF ANY ALTERNATIVE OPTION(S):

- 6.1 The timescales for this review precluded alternative options, for example taking an initial report to the Local Children's Safeguarding Board before discussion at the CYPT Board.

7. REASONS FOR REPORT RECOMMENDATIONS

- 7.1 All Local Authorities and NHS organisations are required to take stock of the effectiveness of safeguarding practice in their areas including a review of assurance arrangements at Board level. This report provides the context for a further report and discussion at the CYPT Board on January 19th 2009

SUPPORTING DOCUMENTATION

Appendices:

1. None

Documents in Members' Rooms

1. None

Background Documents

1. None

