

Subject:	Brighton and Hove Threshold document		
Date of Meeting:	2 June 2014		
Report of:	Executive Director for Children's Services		
Contact Officer:	Name:	Helen Gulvin	Tel: 292804
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Ward(s) affected:	All		

FOR GENERAL RELEASE**1. SUMMARY AND POLICY CONTEXT:**

- 1.1 The Local Safeguarding Children's Board (LSCB) has the responsibility for ensuring that agencies work together to protect children and share an understanding with regards levels of need and risk.
- 1.2 As part of this responsibility LSCB's need to ensure that there is a common understanding across professionals with regards the circumstances whereby they should be making a referral to Children's Social Work services for a child in high need or at risk of significant harm. The document also clarifies the circumstances when to refer to specific agencies to address individual need and when to undertake assessments.
- 1.3 In order to achieve these aims Brighton and Hove have produced a Threshold Document (Appendix 1)

2. RECOMMENDATIONS:

- 2.1 To note the content of this report

3. RELEVANT BACKGROUND INFORMATION/CHRONOLOGY OF KEY EVENTS:

- 3.1 The attached document is based on good practice from other local authorities and amendments and consultation with staff from other agencies in this authority. It starts with a preamble explaining the reasoning and understanding behind the document. The appendices take the reader through the 4 levels of need and the assessment and services available to children and families.
- 3.2 The document is meant as an aid. It is not a checklist, as no two cases are the same. The whole purpose is to aid to help clarify thinking and discussion between professionals and, most crucially, to share decisions with regards risk factors, balancing strengths and weaknesses in the situation for individual children.
- 3.3 The threshold document points out that it can appear that similar situations for children can end up with different services and responses. This illustrates the

need to use professional knowledge, based on evidence and an analysis of the resilient factors within each situation or individual child or family.

- 3.4 The threshold document should also be used to constructively challenge each other within a framework which has been agreed across all agencies.

MASH and Early Help Hub

- 3.5 The threshold document is being introduced at the same time as planning for the implementation of a Multi-Agency Safeguarding Hub (MASH) and an Early Help Hub (EHH) in Brighton and Hove. Both these two hubs are being developed in consultation with a wide range of agencies. The MASH is a system for screening and risk assessing high level children's needs in order to pass these on to Social Work services or to the EHH if the threshold criteria are not met. The EHH will provide advice and support and/or receive referrals about children who are beginning to face more difficulties than can be managed by one agency, for example by the child's school and who might benefit from targeted services to address their needs, or to stop those needs from escalating.
- 3.6 Both hubs require agencies to share a solid understanding of levels of need and risk in the aim of ensuring the right children are dealt with in the right place to ensure a better service for vulnerable children in Brighton and Hove. The threshold document will enable this knowledge.

4. COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT AND CONSULTATION

- 4.1 There has been extensive consultation with agencies represented in the LSCB. Consultation has been through meetings with Head Teachers via school cluster group meetings, meetings with groups of staff, team meetings and through agencies organising feedback through a named worker.

5. FINANCIAL & OTHER IMPLICATIONS:

Financial Implications:

- 5.1 The introduction of the Multi-Agency Safeguarding Hub (MASH) and the Early help Hub are integral elements in the Early Help Workstream within the Children's services VFM programme. These are innovative, new initiatives and there is no available evidence, as yet, as to the level of savings, if any, that can be achieved, although it is hoped that some reduction in high cost activities may be possible.

There are likely to be additional costs in setting up the MASH and EHH, in particular costs relating to premises of c£110k (of which c£60k will be ongoing) and IT infrastructure of c£118k. One off funding of £49k capital and £118k carry forward of 2013/14 underspending budgets have been identified to meet these costs. It is also anticipated that the restructure of the social work teams to align them with the new arrangements will generate further savings, however, decisions regarding the restructure have yet to be finalised so it is not yet possible to ascertain the level of funding required.

Finance Officer Consulted: David Ellis

Date: 2/5/14

Legal Implications:

- 5.2 Statutory Guidance 'Working Together to Safeguard Children 2013' requires LSCB's to publish a threshold document that includes the criteria, including the level of need, for when a case should be referred to local authority children's social care for assessment and for statutory services, per the various key elements of the Children Act referred to in the body of the thresholds document: Under S17 (1) Children Act 1989 it is the general duty of every local authority to safeguard and promote the welfare of children within their area who are in need; and so far as is consistent with that duty, to promote the upbringing of such children by their families by providing a range and level of services appropriate to those children's needs. Under section 17(1) Children's Act 1989, a child is considered to be a child in need if s/he is unlikely to achieve or maintain, or have the opportunity of achieving or maintaining, a reasonable standard of health or development without the help of the services by the local Authority. A child can be both in need, as well as in need of protection. Where there is reasonable cause to suspect that a child is suffering, or likely to suffer, significant harm, the local authority is required under s47 of the Children Act 1989 to make enquiries, to enable it to decide whether it should take any action to safeguard and promote the welfare of the child.

Local Authorities must undertake assessments of the needs of individual children to determine what services to provide and action to take.

Lawyer Consulted: Natasha Watson Date: 19.05.14

Equalities Implications:

- 5.3 The threshold document will be used for all children. Its use will mean that children, regardless of their background should receive an appropriate level of support in order to seek to address the needs identified.

Sustainability Implications:

- 5.4 None

Crime & Disorder Implications:

- 5.5 The threshold document and it's use in the MASH will help the MASH achieve two of it's stated aims which is to identify criminal behaviour which puts children at risk and to identify victims of criminal behaviour.

Risk and Opportunity Management Implications:

- 5.6 Risks to not having this document are that there will be too many, or too few children, receiving services which are commensurate to the risk in their circumstances.

Public Health Implications:

- 5.7 None

Corporate / Citywide Implications:

5.8 This document will apply across the City and all agencies working within the geographic boundaries

6. EVALUATION OF ANY ALTERNATIVE OPTION(S):

6.1 Without a threshold document we will not have a written basis for a shared understanding of risk factors and of when to refer to different services

7. REASONS FOR REPORT RECOMMENDATIONS

7.1 For information

SUPPORTING DOCUMENTATION

Appendices:

Appendix 1 - Brighton & Hove Inter-Agency Threshold of Need and Intervention Criteria for Children and Young People

Documents in Members' Rooms

None

Background Documents

None