

Decisions of the Safeguarding Overview and Scrutiny Committee

5th January 2012

Present:

*Councillor Bridget Perry (Chairman)

Councillors:

* Andrew Strongolou	* Brian Salinger
* Anthony Finn (for Kate Salinger)	* Andrew McNeil (for Ansuya Sodha)
* Anne Hutton	* Brian Gordon
* Sury Khatri (for Alison Cornelius)	* Agnes Slocombe Zakia Zubairi

* denotes Member present

Also Attending:

Councillor Andrew Harper – Cabinet Member for Education, Children & Families

1. MINUTES OF THE LAST MEETING (Agenda Item 1)

RESOLVED-that the minutes of the meeting held on 10th October 2011 be agreed as a correct record.

2. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE (Agenda Item 2)

Apologies for absence were received from:

- Councillor Alison Cornelius, who was substituted by Councillor Sury Khatri;
- Councillor Kate Salinger, who was substituted by Councillor Anthony Finn;
- Councillor Ansuya Sodha, who was substituted by Councillor Andrew McNeil;
and
- Councillor Zakia Zubairi.

3. DECLARATION OF MEMBERS' PERSONAL AND PREJUDICIAL INTERESTS (Agenda Item 3)

Member:	Subject:	Interest Declared:
Councillor Brian Salinger	Agenda Item 8 (Fairer Contributions Policy)	Personal but non-prejudicial interest by virtue of a family member being a vulnerable adult

4. PUBLIC QUESTION TIME (Agenda Item 4)

None received.

5. MEMBERS' ITEM (Agenda Item 5)

Councillor Kate Salinger: The Achievements of the Safeguarding Team

Councillor Finn introduced the Members item on behalf of Councillor Kate Salinger and expressed gratitude for the public recognition of this area of work within the Children's Service and of the achievements of the Safeguarding team. All members of the Committee acknowledged and congratulated the Children's Safeguarding team on their achievements.

RESOLVED-

- (1) That the Committee note and welcome the achievements of the Children's Service Safeguarding team.**

6. THE MUNRO REVIEW (Agenda Item 6)

The Committee received a report on the key recommendations of the Munro Review and the implications for Barnet Council Children's Services. The Cabinet Member for Education, Children & Families informed the Committee that the Children's Service welcomed the review as it would enable professionals to make the best judgements to support children and their families through the reform of practices and procedures that had become too bureaucratic and unable to respond flexibly to local need. The Cabinet Member for Education, Children & Families informed the Committee that key elements of the Munro recommendations were being implemented through the creation of a Munro Project Group that had been set up to oversee the individual workstreams relating to its recommendations.

A Member raised concerns about the impact of recent decisions concerning Child and Adolescent Mental Health Services relating to the provision of Educational Psychology Services. In particular, that the reduction of these services could affect the service provision for young people with emotional and behavioural needs in transition between child and adult services and that Barnet's Children's Service might not be able to deliver the support that was needed through its early intervention services. The Committee were informed that should the proposed budget reductions be implemented that service delivery at the front line would not be adversely affected.

The Cabinet Member for Education, Children & Families assured the Committee that the Children's Service were determined to make early intervention work effectively within the borough and would not have taken any decisions that would prevent that from occurring.

The Committee sought further information on how the Munro recommendations would affect staffing levels and whether more staff would have to be recruited. Members were informed that the Munro recommendations emphasised a change in the working culture of child protection services rather than the need for more resources. This would provide social workers with greater flexibility and freedom from unnecessary bureaucracy to work more effectively. The Committee were informed that specialised services such as the Domestic Violence Forum would remain.

RESOLVED that Committee have considered the implications of the Munro Review and note the proposed actions to be taken by the Children's Service.

7. ADULT SOCIAL CARE SERVICES WORKFORCE APPROACH TO SAFEGUARDING ADULTS (Agenda Item 7)

The Deputy Director of Adult Social Care and Health presented to the Committee a report on its workforce approach to Safeguarding Adults. The report set out its overarching approach to promoting safeguarding adults amongst the workforce and of workforce developments currently in place.

The Committee were informed that there had been an 18% increase in the number of safeguarding alerts in 2011/12 which was predicted to continue to rise. This increase in alerts related primarily to older people and adults with learning disabilities. Members sought further information about alerts and were informed that these occurred when an individual contacted the Council about a vulnerable adult.

The Committee were provided with further information on the Safeguarding Adults Training Programme that had been delivered to staff working across health and social care and within the private and voluntary sectors. Members were informed that in 2012 training would continue to be a priority to address staff turnover and refresh skills.

RESOLVED- that the Adult Social care Services Workforce Approach to Safeguarding Adults report be noted.

8. FAIRER CONTRIBUTIONS POLICY (Agenda Item 8)

The Assistant Director for Transformation and Resources and the Customer Financial Affairs Manager provided an update report to the Committee on the implementation of the Fairer Contributions Policy.

The Committee were informed that following the implementation of this policy in June 2011, new policy publicity materials and a financial assessment form, including guidance, had been produced. Help lines had also been set up to deal with queries about the financial assessment process.

The Committee considered the new financial assessment form and some Members commented that they would find it difficult to complete. Members sought information on what income was taken into consideration and felt strongly that war restitution pensions should be excluded completely from the income assessment process, currently there is a partial disregard of this income. Officers were requested to look into the possibility of whether local authorities had any discretion on taking into consideration this as a source of income.

The Committee felt that the income threshold of £23k for those required to pay for care was low and should be raised. Members also sought further information on whether Pensioners provided with charitable financial payments ranging from £10-£20 per week would be affected by this assessment.

The Committee were informed that assessments were considered on a case by case basis and that the Assessment Team were only aware of one case, where charitable payments of that kind had been declared. The income threshold for the payment of

care had been set nationally, and a number of checks and safeguards were in place to ensure that clients had the means to pay.

Members were informed that the £1million pounds generated from care charges had been used to fund care services and that 48% of clients in need of care were not required to pay any contribution.

RESOLVED that –

- (1) the Committee consider that the financial assessment form is overly complicated recommend that the form should be reviewed and simplified.**
- (2) Officers within the Financial Assessment Team be requested to seek further clarification on whether war restitution pensions could be completely excluded from the financial assessment process in charging for care services.**

9. CHANGING RELATIONSHIP WITH SCHOOLS (Agenda Item 9)

The Assistant Director for Schools and Learning and the Cabinet Member for Education, Children and Families introduced the report on the Changing Relationship with Schools. They informed the Committee that Barnet had a diverse range of schools and that educational attainment levels were high.

The Committee were informed that the structure of education had been changing and following the introduction of the Academies Act 2010, and that over half of all Barnet's secondary schools and one primary school had become academies. The Children's Service had a small team in place to support schools to improve the attainment of the lowest attaining children in the borough, and would also continue to plan for the increasing number of children seeking school places.

The Committee sought further information on the Council's relationship with private schools in relation to identifying appropriate school buildings. Members were informed that there was pressure on land in Barnet and a number of existing schools had been required to convert ICT and music suites into class rooms. The Committee were informed that the Council had a programme of disposals of assets and estates that were regularly publicised .The Council priority was to continue to meet its statutory responsibility for children requiring school places and this year it will need to identify an additional 390 places.

The Committee sought further information on access to sports facilities to the wider community when schools become academies. Members were informed that when Schools become academies the transfer agreement included community provision and the Council would ensure that was maintained.

RESOLVED -

- (1) That the report on the Changing Relationship with Schools be noted.**

10. BARNET LOCAL INVOLVEMENT NETWORK (LINK) ANNUAL REPORT (Agenda Item 10)

The Strategic Advisor from the Chief Executive Service introduced the LINK Annual Report .The Strategic Advisor outlined the LINK's roles and responsibilities and informed the Committee that subject to the Health and Social Care Bill, the LINK would be replaced by HealthWatch in 2013.

RESOLVED -

(1) That the Barnet Local Involvement Network Annual Report be noted.

11. CABINET FORWARD PLAN (Agenda Item 11)

The Committee received the most recent Cabinet Forward Plan of Key Decisions.

RESOLVED -

(1) That the report on the Cabinet Forward Plan be noted

12. SAFEGUARDING OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE WORK PROGRAMME (Agenda Item 12)

The Committee considered the work programme and requested that the following items be added to the agenda of the meeting taking place on 16 April 2012:

- (i) Ofsted report on Barnet's Children's Service (2012)
- (ii) Human rights in Homecare for Older People

RESOLVED -

(1) That items listed above be added to the Safeguarding Overview and Scrutiny Committee Work Programme.

13. ANY OTHER ITEMS THAT THE CHAIRMAN DECIDES ARE URGENT

The request from Councillor Hutton for this Members' Item to be included on the agenda for the meeting had been received following the publication of the Committee agenda. To enable Councillor Hutton to present the item the Chairman agreed that the item should be dealt with as an urgent late item of business.

Councillor Anne Hutton introduced her Member's Item on human rights in home care for older people. Councillor Hutton noted that the report by the Human Rights Commission had uncovered areas of real concern in the treatment of older people and significant shortcomings in the way that care had been commissioned by local authorities. Councillor Hutton sought further information on how Barnet's commissioning safeguarded people receiving care in their own homes.

The Associate Director of Joint Commissioning, NHS North Central London and London Borough of Barnet informed the Committee that home and community support service provision had been monitored by contract compliance checks, user satisfaction surveys and face to face reviews with Social Work teams at different intervals. In addition training, quality monitoring reports and personalised approach to care assessments were in place.

The Committee agreed that this item should be added to the work programme for more detailed consideration.

RESOLVED that Human Rights in Home Care for Older People be added to the Safeguarding Overview and Scrutiny Committee Work Programme.

14. MOTION TO EXCLUDE THE PRESS AND PUBLIC (Agenda Item 14)

RESOLVED that under Section 100A(4) of the Local Government Act 1972, the public be excluded from the meeting for the following items of business on the grounds that they involved the likely disclosure of exempt information as defined in paragraph 12A of the Act (as amended):

	Exemption category
Members' Visits to Barnet's Children's Homes	3
Statutory Officer visits	3

X1. MEMBERS' VISITS TO BARNET'S CHILDREN'S HOMES

RESOLVED -

- (1) That the exempt information be noted.
- (2) That the Member rota for visits to Barnet's Children's Home and Young People's Hostel be agreed via email.
- (3) That the Assistant Director for Children's Social Care has discussions with the Cabinet Member for Education, Children and Families on the cessation of the Member visits to Children's Homes by Members of the Safeguarding Overview and Scrutiny Committee and the proposed management and reporting arrangements of these visits by the Corporate Parenting Advisory Group.

X2. STATUTORY OFFICER VISITS

RESOLVED that the exempt information be noted

The meeting finished at 9.20.pm