

# Decisions of the Safeguarding Overview and Scrutiny Committee

12 December 2012

Members Present:-

Councillor Bridget Perry (Chairman)  
Councillor Kate Salinger (Vice-Chairman)

Councillor Alison Cornelius	Councillor Ross Houston
Councillor Barry Evangeli	Councillor Brian Salinger
Councillor Brian Gordon	Councillor Agnes Slocombe
Councillor Anne Hutton	Councillor Zakia Zubairi

Also in attendance:

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

## 1. MINUTES

**RESOLVED** that:

1. **The minutes of the meeting held on 10 September 2012 be agreed as a correct record.**
2. **The minutes of the meeting held of 24 September 2012 be agreed as a correct record.**

## 2. ABSENCE OF MEMBERS

None.

## 3. DECLARATION OF MEMBER'S INTERESTS

None.

## 4. PUBLIC QUESTION TIME (IF ANY)

None.

## 5. MEMBERS' ITEMS (IF ANY)

There were none.

## 6. CARERS' SUPPORT

The Carers Strategic and Commissioning Lead, Jasvinder Kaur Perihar, presented a report which provided the Committee with an update on developments in relation to carer's support in Barnet. The report outlined the key information from the Barnet Carers Strategy 2009 – 2012 which was updated in 2012 to form the Carers Strategy Refresh 2012/13. The Strategy focuses on building on support for carers in health services and seeks to review contingency planning for carers in case of emergency. The strategy also sets out an action plan for 2012/13. The Carers Strategic and Commissioning Lead outlined in particular the work that was being done to align carer's support with the Dementia Pathway.

Officers advised the Committee that there was currently a protocol in place for the support of young carers and that the Council was committed to supporting young carers.

A Member referred to the Barnet Carers Centre and its work as part of a Carers Hub with six local organisations, which were: The Alzheimer Society; Age UK Barnet; Barnet Carers Centre; Caring4Carers; Friends in Need; Jewish Care; and Barnet Mencap. Members questioned what criteria were used to determine the six organisations that formed part of the Carers Hub. The Committee were informed that these organisations were part of an existing carers network and had become part of the Carers Hub as they had been included in the original bid submission.

The Committee commented that many people consider their local hospital to be one that is outside of the London Borough of Barnet, and noted the importance of maintaining good relationships with hospitals both inside and outside of the borough.

A Member questioned the role of Alzheimer's society would have in the Dementia pathway. It was clarified that they have been a key partner in developing the pathway and would assist in the provision of dementia support services for families.

### **RESOLVED that:**

- 3. The Committee notes the progress on the range of work being developed in Barnet to support carers.**
- 4. The Committee request to receive a further update on Carer's Support to a future meeting (in 6 – 9 months time).**

## 7. EXAM RESULTS AND NARROWING THE GAP

The Cabinet Member for Education, Children and Families. Councillor Andrew Harper, and the Learning Network Inspector, Stuart Gray, presented a report on the exam results of Barnet's schools, and how the Children's Service was supporting schools to narrow the gap in educational attainment levels. The report provided an overview of 2012 performance data, and contained information on the action taken to narrow the attainment gaps between children eligible for free school meals and their peers and performance to date. The report also outlined future work to be carried out in order to further reduce attainment gaps.

The Committee noted and supported the work undertaken to narrow the attainment gap. The Cabinet Member for Education, Children and Families commented that some of the

success was down to improvements in identifying children with Special Educational Needs. He also referred to a previous scheme that had been operated, called "Educational Champions" where councillors were paired with looked after children and were tasked with monitoring their educational attainment. The Committee were informed that the Corporate Parenting Advisory Panel were keen to reinstate this scheme.

A Member questioned why children in receipt of Free School Meals were considered as an educational category, and questioned what percentage of children in Barnet were in receipt of Free School Meals. The Learning Network Inspector informed the Committee that Free School Meals was nationally recognised as a category because this was an area associated with lower educational performance.

The Committee noted that as a result of the Academies Act 2010 many schools would become independent of local authority control. Members questioned how the issue of schools converting to Academy Status would affect Barnet's ability to continue be involved with education, exam results, and narrowing the gap. The Cabinet Member for Education, Children and Families told the Committee that he and the Cabinet were pushing Ministers to clarify the situation in relation to Academies policy.

**RESOLVED that:**

- 1. the Committee note and welcome the exam results in Barnet Schools and progress made to narrow the gap in attainment levels .**
- 2. the Committee request that the Learning Network Inspector provides the Committee with the percentage of children who are eligible for Free School Meals in Barnet.**
- 3. that the Committee request that Officers take steps to ensure that they can continue to scrutinise the educational performance and exam results of Academies and Free Schools in Barnet.**

**8. URGENT BUSINESS: YOUTH SHIELD - LONDON SAFEGUARDING CHILDREN AWARD**

The Chairman moved an item of urgent business in relation to the Youth Shield – London Safeguarding Children Award. At the invitation of the Chairman, the Cabinet Member for Education, Children and Families informed the Committee that a group called Youth Shield from Barnet had won the London Safeguarding Children Award 2012. He advised the Committee that Youth Shield is a group of young people who have been raising awareness about issues which threaten the safety of young people. The Cabinet Member for Education, Children and Families suggested that the Committee invite members of the Youth Shield to attend a meeting of the Committee and make a presentation on their work.

**RESOLVED that the Committee invite members of the Youth Shield to attend a future meeting of the Committee in order to present their work and to answer questions about the project.**

**9. BARNET LINK**

The Barnet LINK Manager and Networks and Partnerships Officer, Selina Rodrigues, presented the Barnet LINK Annual Report provided a verbal update on the LINKs' progress over the last year and the LINK's Enter and View reports.

Referring to the Enter and View visit to Dell Field Court Care Home, a Member highlighted the funding for resident's transport had been cut at a time when the number of residents had increased.

Following a question on the role of Barnet LINK, the Committee were informed by the LINK Manager and Networks and Partnerships Officer that the purpose of the LINK was to review health and social care services and lobby and campaign on behalf of residents of the borough. The Committee noted that Barnet LINK would be replaced with Health Watch in April 2013 in each local authority area and a national body called Health Watch England would be established to provide guidance to each area.

During the debate, the Overview and Scrutiny Manager, Andrew Charlwood, highlighted to Members that there had been no formal link regarding Enter and View between the Safeguarding Overview and Scrutiny Committee, the Health Overview and Scrutiny Committee and the Barnet LINK. He suggested that Barnet LINK should establish links with the Scrutiny Officer in order to discuss a mechanism by which matters can be escalated onto the scrutiny work programme.

A Member questioned what training LINK volunteers who conducted Enter and View visits were given. The Committee were informed by the LINK representative that there had been two tranches of training given to volunteers. In the first tranche of training, volunteers had attended a five day accredited course. However, it was noted that a five day course for volunteers was a substantial commitment. With this in mind, the next tranche of volunteers had been placed on a one day course. The Committee were informed that since then, both tranches of volunteers had been given a detailed interview to prepare them for their work. The Committee also heard that each volunteer was provided with a role description, a code of conduct, and were subject to a Criminal Records Bureau check and experienced team leaders have been established to lead small teams of volunteers.

The Committee were informed that between January and March 2013, there were nine Enter and View visits scheduled to take place within the borough.

A Member noted that an Enter and View report to Springdene Nursing and Care Home had remarked the care home advertises itself as having "luxury hotel standards" and that this was misleading. Responding to a question regarding whether recommendations from Barnet LINK Enter and View visits were followed-up by the host. The Committee were informed that responses had been received from Dellfield Court Care Home and Two Rivers Care Home but not from the others. Barnet LINK will talk to the Scrutiny Officer about how this can be followed up.

**RESOLVED that:**

- 1. The Committee notes the Barnet LINK Annual Report and the Barnet LINK Enter and View reports**
- 2. That the Committee request that Officers clarify why residents' transport funding had been cut at Dell Field Court Care Home when the number of residents had increased.**

3. **That the Barnet LINK host (CommUNITY Barnet) be requested to present the Barnet LINK Annual Report 2012/13 to the Committee as soon after 1 April 2013 as practicable, with details of the remaining nine scheduled Enter and View visits that will run between January and March in 2013 being included.**

#### **10. MEMBERS' VISITS TO BARNET'S CHILDREN'S HOMES AND YOUNG PEOPLE'S HOSTELS - OPTIONS PAPER**

The Overview and Scrutiny Manager presented the report to the Committee on options for Members' visits to children's homes and young peoples hostels. The report outlined how Member and Officer visits to children's homes and young peoples hostels currently operate and the statutory requirements in relation to this.

Following the last meeting of the Committee, Officers had made contact with the Corporate Parenting Advisory Panel (CPAP) in order to discuss options for the future conduct and support arrangements for Member's visits as per the committee's recommendations.

The Committee discussed the recommendations of the Corporate Parenting Advisory Group and agreed that the Panel should assume responsibility for supporting Member visits to children's homes. It was further agreed that the Scrutiny Office should support Member visits to young people's hostels on the following basis:

- (i) Responsibility for visiting young people's hostels lies with Members of the Safeguarding Overview and Scrutiny Committee. Responsibility for visiting children's homes lies with the CPAP (as set out in section 9.30 of the report).
- (ii) The ten Committee Members Councillors who visit young people's hostels on a rota basis, with four visits per annum to Barbara Langstone House and four visits per annum to Adamson Court. Of them four visits to each premises, two will be announced and two will be unannounced. This arrangement is to be kept under review in light of the closure of Barbara Langstone House in 2013.
- (iii) Member Visit Feedback Templates are to be reviewed in consultation with the Children's Service. Members will report their feedback regularly to the Safeguarding Overview and Scrutiny Committee.
- (iv) Findings of the Member visits to children's homes will be presented annually to the Safeguarding Overview and Scrutiny Committee.

#### **RESOLVED:**

4. **That the Committee approve the recommendations made by the Corporate Parenting Advisory Panel and support the proposal that the Corporate Parenting Advisory Panel assumes responsibility for Member visits to Children's homes, as outlined in section 9.30 of the report.**
5. **That the Committee request that Overview and Scrutiny Officers produce a rota to ensure that all Member's visits to the homes take place.**

## **11. ADVANCE NOTICE OF EXECUTIVE DECISIONS**

The Committee expressed dissatisfaction with the 28 Advanced Notification Day Notification document as a means of forward work programme planning. The Committee emphasised that whilst the Cabinet Forward Plan had been an imperfect as a mechanism for planning future work, they felt that it provided a more coherent picture of decisions due to be taken by the executive that should come before the committee for scrutiny.

**RESOLVED that the Committee request that representations be made to the Leader of the Council to request that a Forward Plan of Executive decisions spanning three to six months period be provided to scrutiny committees.**

## **12. SAFEGUARDING OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY WORK PROGRAMME**

The Committee considered the work programme and requested that the following items be reported to the 20 March 2013 meeting:

- Barbara Langston House – a report on the closure of this hostel including details of pathways for residents.
- Youth Shield - a report from the members of Barnet Youth Shield on their work.
- Child and Adults Mental Health Services – Future Education Provision
- Member Visits to Young People's Hostels

**RESOLVED:**

**1. That the Committee work programme for 2012/13 be noted.**

**2. That the items above be included in the 2012/13 work programme.**

## **13. ANY OTHER ITEMS THE CHAIRMAN DECIDES ARE URGENT**

None.

## **14. MOTION TO EXCLUDE THE PRESS AND PUBLIC**

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 involve the likely disclosure of exempt information as defined in sections 1 and 2 of paragraph 9 of Part 1 of Schedule 12A of the Act (as amended).

## **15. STATUTORY REGULATION 33 - OFFICER VISITS TO BARNET'S CHILDREN'S**

**HOMES**

**RESOLVED that the exempt information be noted.**

The meeting finished at 9.17 pm.

**16. ANY OTHER EXEMPT ITEMS THE CHAIRMAN DECIDES ARE URGENT**

None.

The meeting finished at 9.17 pm.