

Decisions of the Safeguarding Overview and Scrutiny Committee

23 October 2013

Members Present:-

Councillor Bridget Perry (Chairman)

Councillor Alison Cornelius
Councillor Barry Evangeli
Councillor Brian Gordon
Councillor Anne Hutton

Councillor Julie Johnson
Councillor Brian Salinger
Councillor Agnes Slocombe
Councillor Zakia Zubairi

Also in attendance

Councillor Sachin Rajput, Cabinet Member for Adults
Councillor Reuben Thompstone, Cabinet Member for Education, Children and Families

Apologies for Absence

Councillor Kath McGuirk
Councillor Kate Salinger

1. MINUTES OF THE PREVIOUS MEETING

RESOLVED that the minutes of the meeting dated 9 September 2013 be agreed as a correct record.

2. ABSENCE OF MEMBERS

Apologies for absence were been received from Cllr. Kate Salinger, who was absent due to Council Business. Apologies for absence were also received from Councillor McGuirk, who was substituted for by Councillor Julie Johnson.

3. DECLARATION OF MEMBERS' INTERESTS

There were none.

4. PUBLIC QUESTION TIME (IF ANY)

There were none.

5. MEMBERS' ITEMS (SUBMITTED IN ACCORDANCE WITH OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY PROCEDURE RULE 9) (IF ANY)

There were none.

6. ADULTS AND COMMUNITIES DELIVERY UNIT ANNUAL COMPLAINTS REPORT 2012/13

Councillor Sachin Rajput, the Cabinet Member for Adults introduced the Adults and Communities Delivery Unit Annual Complaints Report 2012/13, which is required to be reported to Committee under statutory regulations.

In introducing the report, the Cabinet Member for Adults advised the Committee of the following:

- From the 1 April 2012 to 31 March 2013 inclusive, the department has dealt with 12,998 people.
- The figure 12,998 above consists of 5,459 contacts and 7,539 people receiving a service in 2012/2013.
- The figure 7,539 above consists of 1,959 new Community Care Assessments and 5,580 reassessments.

Referring to the report, the Cabinet Member for Adults informed the Committee that the number of complaints at the London Borough of Barnet was low compared to other Boroughs, and that the number of compliments received had increased.

A Member questioned how the Council was able to keep track of the quality of care delivered by third party providers. The Cabinet Member for Adults advised the Committee that the quality of care delivered by third party providers was monitored by continued dialogue.

A Member questioned whether the average person would know about the complaints process, and raised concern that people might be put off making a complaint because they were concerned that complaining might make the situation worse. The Member also questioned the Cabinet Member for Adults as to how the Council could reassure residents that complaints would be dealt with sympathetically. The Cabinet Member for Adults advised the Committee that the Council had to make sure that that procedures were in place to safeguard, and emphasised the need to reassure individuals that the Council would seek to protect them.

RESOLVED that the Committee note the contents of the report.

7. POST-DECISION SCRUTINY: SAFEGUARDING IN BARNET

The Cabinet Member for Adults introduced this report, which had been requested by the Committee for post-decision scrutiny following the paper being received by Cabinet on 24 September 2013. The report provided an overview of activities and Governance in relation to the Council's Safeguarding responsibilities.

Referring to the report, the Cabinet Member for Adults noted the excellent detection rate on hate crimes. The Cabinet Member for Adults also referred to the Peer Review that Barnet had undertaken, where Barnet were noted as an example of best practice. The Committee were also advised that the number of Independent Mental Capacity Advocacy referrals had gone up.

The Cabinet Member for Education, Children and Families advised that it was regrettable that the report had not come to the Safeguarding Overview and Scrutiny Committee in advance of it being received by the Cabinet.

The Cabinet Member for Education, Children and Families advised the Committee that the key point from the report in the respect of Safeguarding Children was the outcomes from the Monroe Report, noting that the Statutory guidance, "Working Together to Safeguard Children (2013)" was revised following the Munro Review. The Committee noted that this guidance sets out how organisations and individuals should work together to safeguard and promote the welfare of children and young people in accordance with the Children Act 1989 and the Children's Act 2004.

A Member questioned if the definition of a hate crime had widened. A Member then noted that people can be abused because of their religion, and commented that the report did not encapsulate religion within the definition of hate crime. The Cabinet Member for Adults advised that he thought that the report should have included religion within the definition of hate crime. Members expressed dissatisfaction that there was not a clear definition of hate crime, and requested that Officers provide the Committee with a nationally recognised definition of hate crime.

A Member referred to a statistic in the report that noted that 16% of the 365 people entering treatment for drugs and alcohol in Barnet are parents with children, and that anecdotal reports suggested that there were many more drug using parents in Barnet who are not entering treatment, which needed to be resourced. The Member questioned how this issue is being considered. Karen Jackson, the Adults Social Care Assistant director advised the Committee that she would circulate this information to the Committees. Nicola Francis, the Family Services Director advised the Committee of the need for Early Intervention and joint working between Delivery Units, and noted that the earlier the Council can intervene, the lower the risk and the cost.

A Member noted that the report stated that four hate crime awareness seminars would be taking place to improve the under-reporting of hate crime. Officers advised the Committee that they would provide the details of these seminars outside of the meeting.

A Member noted that a single independent Chair for both the Barnet Children's and Adults Safeguarding Boards had recently been appointed, and questioned how the single appointment was working. Ms. Jackson advised the Committee that the single appointment was important to Working Together and building a joint understanding. Members requested that Officers provide the details of the new, independent Chair by e-mail.

The Cabinet Member for Education, Children and Families noted that the Munro Review had emphasised the need for joined up working, and advised that the joint Chair would mean that issues are less likely to slip through the net.

RESOLVED that:

- 1) The Committee notes the "Safeguarding in Barnet" report that went to Cabinet on 24 September 2013;**
- 2) The Committee requested to be provided with a nationally recognised definition of hate crime.**
- 3) The Committee request that Officers provide them with information as to how resources for treatment are to be made available to drug-using parents in Barnet.**
- 4) The Committee request the details of the four hate crime awareness seminars as set out in the report.**

5) That the Committee be provided with the details of the new, independent Chair of the Barnet Children's and Adult's Safeguarding Board.

8. BARNET SAFEGUARDING CHILDREN BOARD ANNUAL REPORT 2012/13

Tim Beach, the outgoing Independent Chair of the Barnet Safeguarding Children Board introduced the Board's Annual Report for 2012/13. The report provided an overview of the effectiveness of Safeguarding arrangements in Barnet, and included an assessment of the performance of the Local Authority and its partners in delivering for children. Mr. Beach noted the importance of the independence of the Board continuing to be recognised.

Mr. Beach advised the Committee that the Board's highlight of the year had been the work of Barnet's Youth Shield who had been recognised at the Annual London Safeguarding Children Awards in December 2012. The Committee were also informed of the work that the Board had undertaken to encourage and support the implementation of the Multi-Agency Safeguarding Hub.

Mr Beach also provided the Committee with an overview of the challenges faced by the Board, which were as follows:

- The challenge of continued priority and capacity to deliver safeguarding at a time of budgetary restraint and organisation change across partners;
- The arrangements for the safeguarding of children following the restructure of Primary Care Trusts into Clinical Commissioning Groups;
- The impact of the allocation of grants to the community and voluntary sectors, and its impact on their ability to work with children and families;
- The prevailing culture of caution in relation to information sharing, which has been driven by recent breaches of data protection, and could be seen as a potential barrier to sharing information on the ground.

Mr. Beach referred to the report, and noted whilst 2012/13 saw a small rise in the number of initial assessments, a significant rise in the number of cores assessments, and a rise in Section 47 Child Protection Investigation, the number of children on a Child Protection Plan significantly reduced. The Committee were also advised that Barnet has not been involved in a Serious Case Review for over three years.

Mr. Beach highlighted the rise in the number of referrals relating to managing allegations against adults working with children, and noted that there had been a rise in referrals to 137 (the figures being 121 (2009/10) 96 (2012/11) and 91 (2011/12) Mr. Beach noted an increase in the referrals from social care, which might represent a greater awareness and broadening of the sources of referrals.

A Member noted the number of organisations who were members of the Barnet Safeguarding children Board, and questioned the level of buy-in from the organisations. Mr. Beach advised that generally, buy-in was very good, but noted that it could be difficult to get schools to attend meetings, and noted that some organisations didn't always have the resources to send staff to meetings.

A Member referred to the data in the report that demonstrated the number of London Safeguarding Children Board Courses attended by partner organisations

in the last year, and noted that some organisations, including the Police, had not attended the training courses at all. The Member questioned how the Committee could encourage the Borough Commander to ensure that partners were as informed as possible.

The Committee requested that representations be made through the Borough Commander to highlight the lack of staff training on Safeguarding issues as highlighted in the report, and that the Borough Commander provide a response to the Committee.

Referring to the Independent Chair's introduction in the Annual Report, a Member questioned his view on the associated risks of having a single Chair for both the Adults and Children Safeguarding Boards. Mr. Beach advised the Committee that containing both Adult and Children Safeguarding issues on the same agenda could make the agenda very large, and noted possible challenges for full attendance at meetings. Ms. Francis advised the Committee that there was a need to strike a balance between supporting partner agencies and facilitating attendance.

RESOLVED that:

- 1) The Committee note the report;**
- 2) The Committee request that that representations be made through the Borough Commander to highlight the lack of staff training on Safeguarding issues as highlighted in the report, and that the Borough Commander provide a response to the Committee.**
- 3) The Committee express their thanks to Mr. Beach for his work as the Chair of the Barnet Safeguarding Children Board.**

9. ADVANCE NOTIFICATION OF EXECUTIVE DECISIONS

RESOLVED that the Committee note the Advanced Notice of Executive Decisions.

10. SAFEGUARDING OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE FORWARD WORK PROGRAMME

The Committee noted the Forward Work Programme, as set out in the report.

RESOLVED that the Committee note the Forward Work Programme.

11. ANY OTHER ITEMS THE CHAIRMAN DECIDES ARE URGENT

There were none.

The meeting finished at 8.55 pm