

Decisions of the Safeguarding Overview and Scrutiny Committee

14 January 2014

Members Present:-

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

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

Also in attendance

Cabinet Member for Education, Children and Families – Councillor Reuben
Thompstone

Apologies for Absence

Councillor Kath McGuirk
Cabinet Member for Adults – Councillor Sachin Rajput

1. MINUTES OF THE PREVIOUS MEETING

RESOLVED that the minutes of the last meeting be agreed as a correct record.

2. ABSENCE OF MEMBERS

Apologies for absence were received from Councillor Kath McGuirk, who was for substituted by Councillor Julie Johnson.

Apologies for absence were also received from the Cabinet Member for Adults, Councillor Sachin Rajput.

3. DECLARATION OF MEMBERS' INTERESTS

Member	Subject	Interest Declared
Councillor Anne Hutton	Agenda Item 7 (Community Advice Contract)	Non Pecuniary interest by virtue of being a trustee of the Barnet Law Service
Councillor Agnes Slocombe	Agenda Item 8 (Multi Agency Safeguarding Hub Report)	Non Pecuniary Interest by virtue of daughter being an employee of the Multi Agency Safeguarding Hub

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. HEALTHWATCH ENTER AND VIEW REPORTS

Julie Pal, the Chief Executive of CommUnity Barnet, presented a report that contained the details of two Enter and View visits that had been undertaken by the HealthWatch Barnet Enter and View Team.

In introducing the Acacia Lodge Enter and View report, Ms. Pal highlighted that the visit had been pre-announced. The Committee noted that Acacia Lodge was a well-established home, and that the volunteers had been generally complimentary about the standard of care. The Committee were also advised that there were no residents with bed sores on the day of the visit.

Ms. Pal referred to the recommendations made by the Enter and View Team on visiting Acacia Lodge, and noted their comments in particular to the replacement of carpets within the dining areas and corridors. Ms. Pal noted that in the response from Acacia Lodge, as set out in the report, had advised that the majority of residents had expressed a preference for carpets in the dining room.

Ms. Pal noted the Enter and View team's recommendations about improving the ventilation in the home, and advised that she felt that the response from Acacia Lodge on this point was defensive. A Member also commented on the reported unpleasant smells referred to in the report, and noted that in the response to the Enter and View report, the Manager and owner of Acacia Lodge had advised that this unpleasant smell was not urine, but a smell from redecorating work. Members commented that they felt these smells were difficult to confuse. Ms. Pal advised the Committee that she would feed Member's comments back to the Enter and View Team.

Referring to the report, a Member advised that they did not know that residents were able to smoke in communal areas of residential homes, such as the conservatory, and questioned the legality of this. Ms. Pal advised that she would clarify this, and respond to the Committee outside of the meeting.

Referring to the report, a Member expressed concern that when observing the written Safeguarding Policy, some contact details were out of date. Ms. Pal advised that she would take this back to the Enter and View Team.

A Member commented that the response from Acacia Lodge had been dismissive, and questioned the powers that HealthWatch and the Borough had in relation to recommendations arising from the Enter and View Report.

A Member questioned which organisation had responsibility when it came to matters of concern arising from care homes. Matthew Kendall, the Community and Wellbeing Assistant Director advised the Committee that the Care Quality Commission was responsible for this. Mr. Kendall stressed the importance of close working between

HealthWatch Barnet, the Local Authority and the premises being inspected in order to improve relations.

Ms. Pal then introduced the Enter and View report on The Limes Care Home in Fenstanton Avenue. The Committee were advised that this was a pre-announced visit conducted by four volunteers.

Ms. Pal drew the Committee's attention to a recommendation arising from the report which was for staff to wear name badges, and noted that this was important to family members as it provided assurance that care staff were who they were.

The Committee noted that a urine smell had been reported in the entrance hall, but not elsewhere, and commented that the response from the Manager of the care home was accepting, and that the issue had been resolved.

A Member questioned if the Enter and View team received a different impression when an announced or un-announced visit was undertaken. Ms. Pal advised the Committee that the Enter and View team had undertaken un-announced visits, but had found that they weren't able to speak to as many family members, and staff, and therefore felt that announced visits were preferable. The Member advised that HealthWatch volunteers might be able to catch out premises if the visits were unannounced, and questioned if that advantage would ever arise. Ms. Pal advised the Committee that whilst the CQC's role was to regulate, HealthWatch's role was to consider services from the consumer's point of view.

Mr. Kendall advised the Committee that it was intended that care homes see HealthWatch Enter and View visits as a helpful prompt, and look forward to their visit. The Committee were reminded that since 1 April 2014 64% of care homes visited by Healthwatch Barnet;s Enter and View Teams had made changes based on their recommendations.

A Member noted that the issues of name badges and hand gel had been raised in the reports, and commented that if these issue was of concern to HealthWatch Barnet, then the organisation could write to all of the care homes in the Borough. The Member questioned if the CQC had the same view on name badges. Ms. Pal informed the Committee that the Enter and View team met with the CQC, and that she would pass the comments of the Committee on, so that this matter could be discussed at a future meeting.

RESOLVED that:-

- 1) The Committee note the HealthWatch Barnet Enter and View Reports;**
- 2) The Committee request that CommUnity Barnet pass their comments about the reported smell at Acacia Lodge to the HealthWatch Barnet Enter and View Team;**
- 3) The Committee request that CommUnity Barnet clarify the legality of smoking in communal areas of residential homes;**
- 4) The Committee request that CommUnity Barnet pass their concerns about the out of date contact details for the Safeguarding Policy to the HealthWatch Barnet Enter and View Team;**
- 5) The Committee request that their comments regarding name badges and hand gel be passed on to the HealthWatch Barnet Enter and View team for discussion in a future meeting with the Care Quality Commission.**

7. COMMUNITY ADVICE CONTRACT

Mathew Kendall, the Assistant Director for Community and Wellbeing introduced a report in the name of the Cabinet Member for Adults which provided the Committee with an update on the provision of the Community Advice Service contract.

Mr. Kendall advised the Committee that the current Community Advice Contract was delivered by the Barnet Citizens Advice Bureau. The Committee noted that the current value of the contract was around £1.2 million, and that the contract would end in 2015. The Committee were also informed that the new contract would go out to tender in due course.

Gary Johnson, Customer Finance Manager, Adults and Communities advised that the service provided a large amount of welfare and debt advice with a focus on resolving problems at the first point of contact. The Committee noted that seventy per cent of problems were dealt with in this way. The Committee noted that if advice could not be given on the first point of contact, then the issue would be considered by a generalist advisor.

A Member referred to the Barnet Law Service, which under the umbrella of the Community Advice Contract delivers second tier specialist advice in the areas of welfare benefits advice and representation; immigration and nationality advice, and employment advice and representation. The Member advised that the Barnet Law Service received a significant amount of funding from the Citizens Advice Bureau, which was in turn, funded by Barnet Council, and expressed concerns that due to cuts in funding, the Barnet Law Service would have to shut in March if additional funding was not secured.

Councillor Hutton advised the Committee that she was a trustee of the Barnet Law Service, and noted that Barnet Law Service had also being affected by Legal Aid reductions. Councillor Hutton noted that redundancy notices had already been issued by Barnet Law Service and that the service would close in March unless a new funding stream was found.

Mr. Kendall advised the Committee that the Barnet Law Service wouldn't receive a huge reduction in funding from the Citizen's Advice Bureau, but other funding streams were reducing. The Committee also noted that Mr. Kendall would be meeting with Tim Clark, the Chief Executive of the Barnet Citizens Advice Bureau to discuss how the service would be provided.

Mr. Clark advised the Committee that it was regrettable that the Barnet Law Service was in this situation, and commented that they were falling victim to a reluctance to fund specialist legal advice. Mr. Clark informed the Committee that it would be a tragedy for the Barnet Law Service to close, and advised that should that happen, then the Barnet Citizens Advice Bureau would endeavour to take on the resulting work to try and minimise the impact.

A Member of the Committee questioned if free Solicitor's surgeries still took place within the Borough. Mr. Clark advised the Committee that such surgeries did take place, and informed the Committee of the "Advice Partnership" which is funded by the Big Lottery Fund, where legally qualified members donate appointments slots, providing a single point of access for advice.

A Member advised the Committee that an Advice Provision Task and Finish Group had been completed at the London Borough of Barnet, and that one of the recommendations of the Group had been to provide training for front line staff on benefit advice, and asked what the position with independent housing advice was. The Member also advised that Barnet Homes now provided an advice service. Mr. Clark informed the Committee that he had become the Chief Executive Officer of the Barnet Citizens Advice Bureau seven year ago, and noted the success of the organisation in obtain other funding streams. Mr. Clark advised that he expected resourcing to remain under threat, and that he would continue to lobby for properly resourced advice services when the contract was retendered. Mr Clark confirmed that under the terms of the Community

Advice Service contract training was provided for front line staff. Referring to Barnet Homes, Mr. Clark advised that he believed that there were two posts at Barnet Homes that provided advice, and stressed the importance of signposting people to the correct outlet.

A Member questioned if it would be possible for the Barnet Law Service to attend a meeting with Senior Officers from the Barnet Citizens Advice Bureau and the Council in order to try and find a solution to the threat of closure of the Barnet Law Service. Mr. Kendall advised the Committee that it must be clear that the Council has no direct contract with the Barnet Law Service.

A Member advised that the purpose of the Community Advice Contract had been to avoid having individual discussions about advice provision, and commented that any such discussions should be had by the Barnet Citizens Advice Bureau. Mr. Kendall advised the Committee that there would already be a meeting taking place between the Council and the Barnet CAB. A Member of the Committee suggested that the Committee resolve to request that the Cabinet Member for Resources and Performance be requested to attend this meeting.

RESOLVED that:-

- 1) The Committee note the contents of the report;**
- 2) The Committee note that the Community and Wellbeing Assistant Director will be meeting with the Chief Executive of Barnet Citizens Advice Bureau regarding advice provision and request that the Cabinet Member for Resources and Performance be updated on the issues raised and the outcome of this meeting.**

8. MULTI-AGENCY SAFEGUARDING HUB (MASH) UPDATE REPORT

Councillor Reuben Thompstone, the Cabinet Member for Education, Children and Families introduced a report which provides an update on the implementation of the Barnet Multi-Agency Safeguarding Hub (MASH) which went live in August 2013.

The Cabinet Member for Education, Children and Families outlined the structure of the MASH, which is led by a Children Social Care Team Manager, who is responsible for assessing risk & risk rating all referrals. The Committee were advised that the Social Care team consists of experienced social workers, five social work assistants and five duty support officers, who are co-located with the Police Public Protection Desk. The Committee also noted that the MASH employs a health visitor, an education officer, a probation officer, an adult mental health worker, Children and Adults Mental Health Services social work manager, and an officer from Barnet Homes attends one day a week.

The Committee were advised that the MASH was a joined-up service, and that data sharing agreements are in place with all partner agencies.

A Member advised the Committee that she had attended the launch of the MASH, and noted the success of the MASH so far.

A Member of the Committee questioned if MASH staff were finding the new organisation beneficial. Carolyn Greenaway, the Head of Assessment and Children In Need advised the Committee that the MASH staff were finding it very useful to have everyone in the same room, and noted the benefit in having better access to information, which in turn, could make responses more timely.

Responding to a question, Ms Greenaway advised the Committee that the MASH enabled staff to research an issue, which in turn assisted them in making earlier decisions about taking action, or if action was necessary at all.

A Member sought reassurance that the MASH was being fully supported by external partners. Nicola Francis, the Family Services Director advised the Committee that the MASH was being very well supported. Ms. Francis also noted that partner agencies were contributing to the staffing of the MASH, providing the MASH with the opportunity to grow in the future.

Referring to the report, the Chairman noted that an evaluation of the MASH is planned for April 2014, and questioned if the Committee would be able to receive this report at their next meeting on 10 April 2014. Ms. Francis advised the Committee that they anticipated that the evaluation would take approximately three months to complete, and that it would not be ready to be received at the Committee's meeting in April.

RESOLVED that the Committee note the report.

9. ADVANCE NOTIFICATION OF EXECUTIVE DECISIONS

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

10. SAFEGUARDING OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE FORWARD WORK PROGRAMME

The Committee considered 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 8.33 pm