

Report to: CABINET
CHILDREN & YOUNG PEOPLE'S PANEL

Date: 22 JANUARY 2009
15 JANUARY 2009

Subject: RESPONSE TO HARINGEY JOINT AREA REVIEW

Report of: DIRECTOR OF CHILDREN & YOUNG PEOPLE'S
SERVICES

Contact officer: MARLYN BANHAM 01942 486003

Purpose / summary: To outline to Members the actions being undertaken in Wigan in response to the recent Joint Area Review in Haringey, following the death of Baby P.

Alternative options considered and reason for selecting the one recommended: To continue with practices as now without any consideration of the Haringey Joint Area Review recommendations. This would clearly be inappropriate and unacceptable.

Recommendation / decision: Members are asked to:-

- Note and agree the proposed actions to audit practice.
- Receive recommendations for action and implementation when the audit is completed in March 2009.
- Agree to participate in a programme of awareness raising in relation to their responsibilities for Child Protection / Safeguarding.
- Review financial and human resource requirements in the light of action agreed through the Safeguarding Board.

The decision will be made as a result of this report and will be published within 48 hours

Risks / Implications:

Financial:	Not yet identified
Staffing:	Not yet identified
Policy:	Not yet identified

Equal Opportunities - Has a Diversity Impact Assessment been conducted?
Wards affected:

Will be considered as part of the audit process
All

Property Implications – Does the proposal involve a reduction, addition or change to the Council’s asset base or its occupation?

No

If yes, have the property implications been agreed with the Corporate Property Officer?

Does this proposal have significant implications for the Council and the local population?

A diversity impact assessment is not necessary at this stage, however, equality and diversity implications have been considered when producing this report.

Does this proposal involve a new policy or procedure or significant changes to an existing policy or procedure?

A diversity impact assessment is not necessary at this stage, however, equality and diversity implications have been considered when producing this report.

Has the Service Director - Borough Solicitor confirmed that the recommendations within this report are lawful and comply with the Council’s Constitution?

Yes

Has the Service Director - Corporate Services confirmed that any expenditure referred to within this report is consistent with the Council’s budget?

Yes

Are any of the recommendations within this report contrary to the Policy Framework of the Council?

No

* delete which applicable

For Cabinet reports only :

Categorisation of the report:	X
Discussion leading to a decision	
Monitoring	
Sharing for corporate understanding	

	X
Discussion	X
Decision	
Information	X

Tracking/Process:

	Consultation	Ward Members	Partners
Panel	Overview & Scrutiny	Cabinet	Council
15.01.09.		22.01.09.	

There are no Background Papers to this Report within the meaning of Section 100D of the Local Government Act 1972.

Proper Officer _____

Date 30 December 2008

1. **BACKGROUND**

- 1.1 Members will be aware that following the death of Baby P in Haringey and the subsequent findings of a serious case review, the Secretary of State for Children, Schools and Families commissioned a special Joint Area Review.
- 1.2 This inspection was to undertake an urgent and thorough inspection of the quality of practice and management of key services which contribute to the effective safeguarding of children in the local area.
- 1.3 This involved rigorous scrutiny of the quality of practice and decision making by front line workers and their managers, including the effectiveness of management practice and performance management systems.
- 1.4 The inspection listed a series of weaknesses in Haringey's safeguarding and child protection arrangements and went on to make a series of recommendations.
- 1.5 It is a clear expectation that all Safeguarding Boards will take note of these recommendations and that Director's of Children's Services will satisfy themselves that local arrangements are robust and effective.

2. **WIGAN'S RESPONSE**

- 2.1 The following actions have been taken to date:
 - The recommendations from the Laming Inquiry into the death of Victoria Climbié (2003) the recommendations from the serious case review in Wigan (2008) and the action plan of the Wigan Safeguarding Children Board (WSCB) which followed have all been considered alongside the Haringey JAR by the Head of Service, Social Care.
 - An audit of the social care functions in respect to safeguarding and a detailed action plan has been developed which will, when completed address all the areas outlined in the documents referred to. It is envisaged that a report will be available by mid-March outlining any further actions that need to be taken.
 - A social work manager has been seconded to ensure this work is completed with appropriate urgency.
 - The WSCB has invited other departments of the council and partner agencies to submit any action plans they may be required to develop to the Executive by mid January to ensure that the Board can be working to one agreed plan and not a disparate set of plans across agencies.
 - The timeframe for this work will be agreed at an extra-ordinary meeting of WSCB on 14 January 2009.
 - A letter has been sent to all schools and partner agencies reminding them of the agreed referral processes if they have concerns about a child and a series of meetings are planned with head teachers to share any concerns. The first of these meetings took place on 15 December

when the head of social care met with the Head teachers in the West of the Borough. This meeting was well received.

- Meetings are taking place between the head of social care and senior police officers and health care staff to agree joint audit arrangements.
- Senior officers across the council have been fully briefed about the current state of social care services and the Director of Children's Services and Chief Executive have been to speak with front line staff.
- Union representatives have met with the Director of Children's Services and Head of Service for social care to discuss support to front line staff.

2.2 The analysis of the social care action plan together with those of other agencies and the result of the audits ongoing and planned will inform any recommendations to the Council regarding safeguarding practice.

3. **KEY ISSUES**

3.1 Given the emphasis placed on practice at this time and the potential for an unannounced inspection by Ofsted, Members need to be aware of some key issues within the Borough.

3.2 The recruitment and retention of experienced social workers and managers to front line services in social care is problematic and enduring. The current negative Press will compound this and the absence of key staff has the potential to leave the Council and therefore children vulnerable in the delivery of safeguarding services. Whilst this is the case nationally, Wigan has additional difficulties given the geographical closeness of neighbouring authorities and disparity in pay.

3.3 There is less difficulty recruiting newly qualified social workers and we now have the added inducement of being part of a pilot project supporting newly qualified social workers throughout their first year. We can not however run a child protection service utilising newly qualified staff and issues around support and supervision are to the fore in the Haringey JAR.

3.4 It is very likely that the newly qualified model or something very close to it will need to be adopted for all front line workers with further implications for manager's time and case work allocation. (this recommends additional supervision times and restrictions on the number and type of cases allocated) The current arrangements for child protection are contained in Appendix 1.

3.5 The social care action plan is looking into the tasks undertaken by social workers to determine if capacity could be increased by increasing the business support offered thereby releasing workers from administrative tasks and increasing their interaction with children and families.

3.6 The Integrated Children's System (a government requirement to deliver a comprehensive e- record for every child involved with social care services) has had a significant impact on social work time. Although when fully implemented it will have many advantages in respect to the consistent assessment, planning and reviewing of children's plans without immediate

training and ongoing systems support it will remain the case that social workers are spending only about 20% of their time directly with families.

- 3.7 Every child in care or child subject to a child protection plan has an allocated worker but there is limited capacity to cover these children during sickness or other absences notably maternity leave. There are currently cases requiring social work intervention awaiting allocation. These cases are kept under constant review and re-prioritised for allocation by managers.
- 3.8 There have been 60 more children and young people looked after in the last twelve months and responsibility for these children has been absorbed within existing resources. The trend for children entering care is an increasing one and in line with other local authorities. It is anticipated that this trend will remain upwards in the next twelve months with consequent strain on both financial and human resources.
- 3.9 Key features in Haringey were the claim that senior managers and elected members were not in touch with the front line staff and had limited understanding of their duties and responsibilities. Members can be re-assured that it is not the case in Wigan that senior managers are not in touch with the reality of front line working.
- 3.10 In respect to the understanding of Members, a recommendation of this report will be to provide awareness raising training for Members into the roles and responsibilities of the Council in respect to child protection.
- 3.11 The claim in Haringey that social worker's frequently had their requests to bring children in to care blocked by managers for financial or other reasons is again not the case in Wigan.
- 3.12 Requests for children to come into care or for legal proceedings are subject to case management discussions between social workers and line managers and then to a Panel process where individual staff present their case to a range of senior managers and legal advisor. The decision to accommodate a child is taken separately to the decision to fund placements.
- 3.13 Whilst great rigour is applied to the request to purchase external placements we clearly separate the placement decision from the care decision.
- 3.14 The rise in the care population has stretched our resources in respect to foster carers and residential places provided in house and has increased the spend on agency placements.
- 3.15 The Care Matters grant has provided for the employment of three further family finding social workers in family placement and adoption and it is anticipated that when in post they will create further placement options within the Council's own resources. There will however remain increasing pressure on the external placement budget.

4. **PROPOSALS**

- 4.1 The Head of Safeguarding to coordinate the audit of safeguarding and ensure that the action plan is completed.

4.2 The social care action plan will concentrate of three key objectives:-

- To review the policies and procedures underpinning child protection
- To provide targeted training in the key areas of child protection
- To review capacity and workload management

and a detailed outline of the objectives and associated tasks is attached for information as Appendix 2.

4.3 The tasks identified directly relate to the need to ensure confidence and competence in staff undertaking child protection work and the ability of managers to manage risk and audit the quality of interventions with children and their families.

4.4 The social care action plan will be incorporated into the broader Safeguarding Board action plan and will be monitored via the Executive Group of the Safeguarding Board, reporting to the Board as required.

4.5 A training programme will be developed to address Elected Members responsibilities in respect of child protection / safeguarding issues.

4.6 A detailed report will be brought back to Cabinet outlining the outcome of the audit and identifying any subsequent recommendations to be addressed.

5. **CONCLUSIONS**

5.1 Members are asked to support the proposed actions outlined to audit social care practice and to receive further details on completion of the audit in March 2009.

Children and Young People's Service

Social Care

Child Protection Processes

Children's Duty Team

The Children's Duty Team are the service responsible for the referral and assessment role of the department. They are based together in one building in Ince in close proximity to the Children in Need teams (3) and the Police Child Protection Unit (based in the Town Hall with the Children in Need social workers)

Development money was provided to the team in early 2008 to provide an additional senior social worker and 2 further social workers

The Duty Team consists of a team of social workers, 2 managers, 2 senior social workers and 6 social workers and a support team with a manager and 10 support staff. A third team manager post has been approved and the recruitment process started. There are 4 children's duty officers. There is a link manager between the two teams and Group Manager overseeing the whole service.

A team of 4 Children's Duty Officer's (CDO's admin grade 3/4) receive all telephone and mail contact in respect to concerns about children not already allocated to a social worker.

If a child has a social worker then all contact in relation to that child is sent to the relevant person

The CDO records as a 'contact' on the ICS System (a computer based national programme for the management of all social care data) information which appears to meet the threshold criteria for social care level 3b and 4 of Wigan Safeguarding Children's Board Threshold of Need).

This information is then sent electronically to a social work manager or senior practitioner who makes a decision about whether there is sufficient information to immediately progress to a referral or whether further enquiries are necessary including home visits.

Once the information is clear it may be that advice and re-direction to other agencies are appropriate or the case will progress to a referral.

The Framework for Assessment of Children in Need and their Families is the government guidance that determines the process for ongoing work. A decision has to be made at this point within 24 hours as to whether or not an initial assessment should be undertaken.

An initial assessment is a brief record of known information but must include seeing the child and gaining information from other professionals.

The outcome of an initial assessment may be giving advice and information, signposting to other services, providing a service such as parenting support for behaviour management or progression to a more in depth assessment (core assessment) or convening a strategy meeting with the police and other professionals

to determine if there is a need for a child protection investigation under Section 47 Children Act 1989.

A decision is made at the Strategy meeting as to whether this will be a joint police / social work investigation or a single agency response. If there is no immediate evidence of a criminal offence such as concern about neglect then it is usual for social care to proceed alone.

The Section 47 enquiries trigger a core assessment in line with the National Framework and include seeing the child and parents in their home and liaison and involvement from other agencies. The outcome of such enquiries can lead to a range of options including emergency action to safeguard the child, an offer to look after the child on behalf of the parents, with relatives or in foster care or to convene a child protection conference. In other cases no further action or the provision of support services may be the appropriate outcome.

If the outcome is to proceed to a Child Protection Conference this should take place within 15 working days of the strategy discussion. This conference is a multi-agency meeting including the parents and relevant family members and determines on all the information presented if the child needs to have a multi-agency protection plan. The conference can make recommendations for further actions such as consideration of care proceedings but does not have the power to implement action other than the plan.

In Wigan, if a conference recommends consideration of other action the social worker will undertake a case management discussion with their supervisor and record the outcome.

All applications for a child to come into care or for the authority to initiate care proceedings are brought to the Accommodation and Proceedings Panel chaired by the Head of Service, Social Care and consisting of a range of care managers and a solicitor. This Panel has operated for 4 years and gives consistency to decision making and allows for legal challenge.

In future if there are any disagreements between the Independent Reviewing Officer, as Chair of the Child Protection Conference and the responsible Team Manager for the child in respect to the need to either accommodate or initiate proceedings then the case will be brought to the Accommodation and Proceedings Panel to decide.

If a child becomes subject to a child protection plan this will be monitored by a social worker in the Children in Need Teams.

Children in Need Teams

There are 3 Children in Need Teams based at Ince Town Hall. Each team has a manager, 2 senior social workers and 2 teams have 6 social workers and 1 team has 5 social workers. Each team has 1 support worker. There is a specialist team dealing with children with disabilities based at Ince Health Centre. This team also has a manager, 2 senior social workers and 5 social workers with 2 support staff. The disability service deals with child protection and looked after children if there are also disability issues.

Social workers in these teams deal only with children and their families where the threshold of need is at 3b and 4. They undertake all the core assessments (detailed assessments including seeing the child and family on several occasions and liaising and incorporating the information of other agencies within 35 working days). These

assessments will highlight both strengths and concerns and it is possible that during or after their completion decisions are made in respect to child protection.

If children become looked after as part of a support plan they will be monitored by these teams. All applications for care proceedings and court statements and applications are made here.

All children subject to a child protection plan are monitored by these teams. There is a statutory responsibility to ensure that there are regular meetings of key professionals, known as the Core Group, the frequency and focus of these meetings that should always include parents and children if of sufficient age, is determined by the child protection plan made at the initial conference.

If at any time new information is received about known children then the Framework for Assessment is applied. A decision is made within 24 hours if action needs to be taken by way of a new assessment leading to a strategy discussion. Section 47 enquiry etc.

There are 178 children subject to a child protection plan. All of these children have an allocated social worker.

Performance

There has been a fall in the number of referrals received during 2007/08 but a significant growth in the number of referrals leading to an initial assessment. Wigan is in the top quartile.

The number and timeliness of assessments is used by Inspectors as a measure of the Council's ability to keep children safe by responding promptly to identified need.

There has also been a significant improvement in both the quantity and timeliness of core assessments and we are in the second quartile for the number of core assessments completed

The proportion of initial assessments completed within 7 days has been a key focus during 2007/08. This has resulted in strong improvement bringing performance in line with our statistical neighbour average and above the national average.

Performance in 2008/09 continues to improve and is now above both our statistical neighbours and the national averages.

The number of referrals that are repeat referrals are still too high and will be the focus in 2009/10.

The recent Annual Performance Assessment has judged our ability to keep children safe as Good (3)

Safeguarding Review - Social Care

Appendix 2

Objective	Tasks	Action	Responsibility	Timescale	Outcome
<p>Objective 1 To review the policies and procedures underpinning child protection</p>	<p>1. All CIN and CP procedures to be accessible on the Wigan Council Intranet</p> <p>-Ensure procedures are compatible with ICS requirements</p> <p>-Ensure staff understand how practice guidance fits with ICS</p>	<p>- Communication between operational managers and systems managers to share and input procedures</p> <p>-Practice guidance to be made available alongside ICS training on CP procedures</p>	<p>Karen Hewer to co-ordinate communication. Sean Atkinson and Andrew Meadows to write and input procedures</p> <p>Sean Atkinson</p> <p>Lynda Littler, Paul McIntyre and Sean Atkinson</p>	<p>Mid February</p> <p>Mid February</p> <p>Mid February</p>	<p>All social care workers will have access to up to date guidance to support good practice</p> <p>All social care workers will have access to up to date guidance to support good practice</p> <p>All social care workers will have access to up to date guidance to support good practice</p>
	<p>2. Updated guidance required on:</p> <p>-Thresholds and minimum standards</p> <p>-Responses to non-engagement</p>	<p>Meeting to develop guidance on assessing thresholds in order to streamline responses</p> <p>As above</p>	<p>Paula Jones and Donna Sixsmith</p> <p>Paula Jones and CIN TM</p>	<p>Mid January</p>	<p>Recommendation to be sent to 3b sub group of WSCB</p>

	-Pre-birth assessments	Meeting 16.12.08 to review procedures	Duty and CIN managers	Completed	
	-Strategy discussions	Working party to review and update procedures	Paul McIntyre and PPIU Keith Seddon	Mid February following recommendations from Audit by HOS/Supt.	Improved access to quality decision making between Police and Social Care
	-S47 medicals	Meeting to share difficulties and agree procedures	Jean Butcher and TM	End of January	More timely medicals to aid investigations
	-Conferences and reviews	Meeting to update procedures	Karen Hewer and Kath Vereycken	End of February	Staff aware of process Quality of information improved
	-Protection plans	Reconvene multi-agency panel to review plans since July 2008	Marlyn Banham	End of January	Assurance these CP Plans are SMART
	-IRO/TM communication	Review and ensure distribution of problem resolution procedure	Kath Vereycken and Lynda Littler	End of January	Improved professional practice
	-Case transfers between and within teams	Consult, review and update procedure	Donna Sixsmith, Karen Hewer and Ann Ryall		No cases without management oversight

Objective	Tasks	Action	Responsibility	Timescale	Outcome
	<p>3. New practice guidance required on:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Monitoring SCR actions -Managing cases where domestic violence is a feature (from initial contact at CDT throughout the case) -Information sharing with Out of Hours service -Supervision -Recording and file management 	<p>Develop CRIS forms and supervision process</p> <p>Guidance to be developed in line with SCR recommendations</p> <p>Guidance to be developed to ensure accurate sharing of information between teams</p> <p>Review CRIS forms and CMD forms to ensure performance management and monitoring is easily achievable in supervision</p> <p>Review supervision process to ensure time is available for performance monitoring and professional development</p> <p>Initial practice guidance has been developed. Further work to address SCR recommendations; chronologies; file audits</p>	<p>Group and Team managers</p> <p>WSCB business manager and DV co-ordinator</p> <p>Pam Kennedy and Phil Bullock</p> <p>Team managers and Group managers</p> <p>Karen Hewer</p> <p>Jonathon Elliott</p>	<p>End of February</p> <p>End of February</p> <p>End of January</p> <p>Mid February</p> <p>Mid February</p> <p>End of January</p> <p>End of January</p>	<p>Approved by WSCB</p> <p>Agreed protocol approved by Safeguarding Board</p> <p>Decisions made based On full information</p> <p>Clear record of qualitative and quantitative information</p> <p>S.W.s better supported in decision making</p> <p>Clearer information to support S.W. decisions</p>

		and ICS/Word files		End of January	File audit provides qualitative information for Managers
-Cases awaiting allocation	Review of system to identify and address problems		Team managers		
-Cases in SKI	As above. Consultation with 0-11 centre managers		Team managers; centre managers; Jayne Action		Scrutiny and re-prioritisation of work
-Case closures	As above		Team managers	End of February	Scrutiny and re-prioritisation of work
-Private proceedings	Develop guidance to ensure timely responses to report requests and recommendations for orders		Legal dept; team managers; court users'		Scrutiny and re-prioritisation of work
-Use of section 20 accommodation	Develop guidance following consultation and legal review, to ensure appropriate and streamlined application of Section 20 accommodation, with particular reference to the PLO		Legal dept; A and P panel; SW's; team managers	End of February	More effective use of S.W. time
					Reduce number of young people accommodated without pre planning

<p>Objective 2 To provide targeted training in the key areas of child protection</p>	<p>1. Audit of social workers' completed CP training and training needs.</p> <p>2. Accessing the voice of the child</p> <p>3. Analysis of information and risk within assessments</p> <p>4. Supervision skills-giving and receiving</p> <p>5. Managing risk from a distance</p>	<p>Cross reference staff training records. Identify and address gaps</p> <p>Direct work / communication training</p> <p>New training already identified and due to be commissioned</p> <p>Advanced training to be identified and commissioned</p> <p>Advanced training to be identified and commissioned</p>	<p>Team managers and WSCB training co-ordinator</p> <p>Jan Lee and Kay Prescott and Nicola Leeson</p> <p>Glyn Davies and Lynda Littler - 24 staff before April x 2 days</p> <p>Glyn Davies</p> <p>Glyn Davies</p>	<p>Complete</p> <p>End of February</p> <p>Completed T'M attend January</p>	<p>All social care staff working at thresholds 3b and 4 will receive formal training to improve the effectiveness of their practice</p> <p>Improved practice and decision making</p> <p>Quality of supervision improved. Staff feel supported. Core decisions improved.</p> <p>Improved decision making and management oversight</p>
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Objective	Tasks	Action	Responsibility	Timescale	Outcome
	6. Core groups	Training programme already designed. To be reviewed to ensure training on the development of protection plans. To be delivered	Ruth Lawton and Jean Butcher. All S.W.'s Managers	Set up but not delivered for all S.W.s and Managers	Clearer monitoring of C.P. Plans within core groups
Objective 3 To review capacity and workload management	1. Provide structured opportunities for social care staff to identify and report their concerns in relation to policies, practice and the working environment 2. Audit of staff numbers; caseload numbers and type and geographical areas 3. Audit of caseload capacity 4. Review of workload management schemes Procedure required for case allocation 6. Review of Admin support	Arrange workers' forums; individual consultations and a 'post box' in order to collate and explore views Audit over a specified time period and collate information Time-motion study of a range of casework tasks Research schemes and compare their effectiveness. Consider basis of Climbie recommendations on caseload numbers e.g. Consideration of	Karen Hewer Team managers and Karen Hewer Karen Hewer with social workers Marlyn Banham, Jill Callaghan,	End of January End of February Mid February End of February	All social care staff working at thresholds 3b and 4 will have a workload which enables them to work with all children, young people and families effectively Release S.W. time for family / child

	7. Review of operational management team capacity	creating personal administrators, team clerks Analysis of management tasks	Lorraine Sherburn Group Manager Karen Hewer	End of February	activities Provide evidence to inform service delivery
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Ref SM Social Care Reports Safeguarding Review 23 12 08

Glossary of Acronyms - Safeguarding Review Report - Appendix 2

CIN	Children in Need
CP	Child Protection
ICS	Integrated Children's System
IRO / TM	Independent Reviewing Officer / Team Manager
HOS	Head of Service
SCR	Serious Case Review
CDT	Children's Duty Team
SKI	Service Key Worker Involvement