

SAFEGUARDING REFERENCE GROUP

Tuesday, 19 April 2011

Present:

Councillor Sheila Clarke
Councillor Simon Holbrook (in the Chair)
Councillor Lesley Rennie
Councillor Bob Moon
Councillor Steve Foulkes
Councillor P Davies
Councillor C Meadon

Portfolio Holder

Children's Services and Lifelong Learning
Corporate Resources
Streetscene and Transport Services
Social Care and Inclusion
Leader of the Labour Group
Deputy Leader of the Labour Group
Chair of Children & Young People
Overview and Scrutiny Committee

Officers

Jim Wilkie
Howard Cooper
David Armstrong
Rick O'Brien

Tracey Coffey

Amanda Kelly

Caroline McKenna

Vicky Shaw

Chief Executive
Interim Director of Adult Social Services
Interim Director of Children's Services
Access & Assessment Branch,
Department of Adult Social Services
Strategic Service Manager Children and
Families, Department of Adult Social
Services
Safeguarding Adults Co-ordinator,
Department of Adult Social Services
Integrated Communities & Wellbeing
Branch
Principal Manager – Safeguarding,
Children and Young Person's
Department
Group Solicitor, Department of Law, HR
and Asset Management

Apologies

Councillor J Green
Councillor B Kenny
Julia Hassall

Head of Branch (Children's Social Care)
Children and Young Person's
Department

1. MINUTES

The Safeguarding Reference Group referred to the Minutes of its first meeting held on 27 October 2010 and noted that there was an action outstanding in respect of confidentiality. The Group had requested that a report be

presented to it setting out the different levels of confidentiality and detailing what information should be withheld and under what circumstances. It was considered appropriate to draw up and endorse a confidentiality agreement that could be referred to in case of any future legal challenges. This would enable the Group to demonstrate that confidentiality issues had been thoroughly thought through and a policy formulated, following detailed reasoning.

RESOLVED: That

- (1) the Minutes of the meeting of the Safeguarding Reference Group held on 27 October 2010 be confirmed as a correct record; and
- (2) the report on confidentiality detailed above be presented to the next meeting of the Group on 20 July 2011.

2. ANNUAL REPORTS

The Principal Manager – Safeguarding sought the Group's views on the presentations of the Annual Reports on Safeguarding Children and Safeguarding Adults and proposed that they both be presented at the same time, along with business plans.

RESOLVED:

Subject to the two Safeguarding Annual Reports being agreed and signed off by the Safeguarding Boards in time, they be considered at the next meeting of the Group on 20 July 2011, along with the business plans.

3. FOLLOW UP ACTION FROM INDEPENDENT AUDIT ON CASES IN THE WALLASEY/SOUTH WEST ASSESSMENT TEAMS

A report by the Acting Head of Branch, Children's Social Care summarised the findings so far from the draft independent report of Annie Dodd, a former Assistant Director in another authority, who had been commissioned to undertake an independent audit, following the completion of the Serious Case Review in respect of [REDACTED]. The audit had involved a sample of cases from the two Assessment Teams involved with [REDACTED] and her family.

It was noted that the report was expected to be completed by May 2011 and a copy would be provided for the Leader of the Council, along with a briefing by the Heads of Branch, Social Care and Safeguarding. A Serious Case Review would soon be published which also involved the same two Assessment Teams and it was noted that both Assessment Team managers in place at the time were no longer in the employment of the Council. New managers were in place and it was noted that the workforce was more stable, although the pressures of demands from the level and complexity of referrals remained a significant pressure. Lessons had been learnt from the Serious Case Review and it would be the subject of a report to the next meeting of the Group.

The Group was informed that regular routine auditing had been formally established, with clear reporting lines to the senior management team. In addition, the auditing from the Safeguarding and Quality Assurance Unit was now more robust, with monthly reporting to the Senior Management Team in accordance with the standards and compliance with child protection and looked after children procedures. Members noted that the recent Ofsted inspection had commented on the thoroughness and range of auditing processes that were now in place and the recent unannounced and full safeguarding and looked after children inspections had identified the continued improvement in service. The areas earmarked for development were well known and were now included in the improvement plan. Ensuring that there were sufficient skilled and experienced staff and managers was crucial to this development as well as the focus on supervision, support, auditing and monitoring of the quality of the work and the outcomes for the children and the Council had made significant investment in additional posts.

Members were informed of the investment in professional support and work place development in Wirral, the training put in place for social workers following the ██████████ case, the work undertaken by the University of Salford around the area of neglect and the detailed work undertaken with other agencies e.g. training with Registered Social Landlords and with the Strategic Health Authority around Safeguarding and the roles of being an alerter and where to report any concerns. Members were also informed of the numbers of agency staff and arrangements for recruiting them to cover staff sickness, maternity leave etc. and that some agency staff became permanent employees.

RESOLVED:

That the report be noted.

4. ACTION PLAN FROM ANNOUNCED AND UNANNOUNCED INSPECTION OF CHILDREN'S SERVICES

The Group considered the Action Plan which sets out areas for development, actions required and dates by which they must be completed, the responsible officer and progress to date. Members' suggestions on how to improve this Action Plan were requested

Members agreed that it was a good document and that it was useful to have all of the information in one place. However, there was some confusion in respect of the colour co-ordination used to illustrate any progress made - in particular the amber grading. Consequently, Members requested that the Chief Executive and officers take a corporate approach to performance by revising this using a standard methodology adopted across the Council.

There were concerns over the electronic Integrated Children's System, it was seen as a perennial problem and was featured on the action list. Parts of it were fine. WITs had carried out some improvements and social worker's time

had been freed up as a result but it was a commercial product and far from a perfect system. There had been limited improvement but a disproportional amount of time was still spent on it. A balance would need to be struck so the work social workers were carrying out needed to be evidenced to see if they were spending an inordinate amount of time in the office. Members noted that this System may be referred to in the findings of the Monro Report, due in the next couple of weeks.

RESOLVED:

That the content of the Action Plan from the announced and unannounced inspection of Children's Services be noted.

5. PROGRESS ON CQC INSPECTION IMPROVEMENT PLAN

It was reported that there were 67 milestones in place, evidence was awaited on the first 15, and there would be a need to relook at some actions and milestones, whilst the rest showed evidence of progress.

Members were told that awaiting evidence did not mean that nothing was happening. However, there would be no signing off at the Improvement Board until there was evidence provided of improvement. Evidence registered meant it could be signed off.

The Group noted that some of the work had been completed as part of the CQC. The Action Plan was related to building processes and infrastructure. Processes had been put in place and the Council now had a much more advanced infrastructure to support these processes. It was important to be able to exhibit that there was enough evidence to demonstrate improvements had been made and quality outputs had been delivered.

The report on the Serious Case Review requested for the next meeting would ensure that Members were aware of what was involved and could share in the learning.

The Interim Director of Adult Social Services reported that there was a Serious Case Review on Adults currently under consideration by the Panel. His Officers were trying to apply a similar approach to those applied to Serious Case Reviews on children. As there was no framework of law currently, the Department was seeking to develop its own using best practice from other local authorities and being aware of what did and did not work in relation to children.

Members discussed the recent experience in respect of Maple Home in Birkenhead and inquired whether there had been any cultural changes as a result. They were told that there had been a period of rapid change. People had been under pressure and consequently, may have used certain practices because of these pressures.

The Interim Director of Adult Social Services informed that residents of Maple Home had known there were to be changes but had not been told when they were to be made so as not to promote anxiety. Managing the flow of information had been a matter of judgement.

The Interim Director of Adult Social Services reported that there had been many simultaneous changes within the Department of Adult Social Services as a consequence of the CQC Report. His staff had fully complied and there had been very little resistance to the changes implemented but there had been a degree of anxiety. There had been quite a robust and positive feeding up of issues, as they had arrived, through the management structure and through briefings. Significant arrangements had been put in place to brief staff and it was noted that Officers were now much better about communicating change than they had been previously. The numerous briefings that had been held had been very well received by staff. Good support had been provided by the Press and PR Team. Management out new levels of what personalisation might mean, they were not absolutely sure but they were on the right track.

Members queried the external verification process and how progress made so far could be valued. The Interim Director of Adult Social Services informed of the new approach of sector led support that could be accessed and the partnership arrangements in respect of it. He also informed Members that he had requested that a peer review take place at the end of September/beginning of October 2011. There was no national framework but his expressed view was that it should be carried out using the CQC framework that had originally used, as much as possible. Members also enquired if it was possible to evaluate how this impacted on service users. The Principal Manager – Safeguarding informed that some work was being undertaken on this. The Performance Committee was looking at the safeguarding aspect.

RESOLVED: That

- (1) the report be noted; and
- (2) a presentation and report be made to the next meeting of the Group on the [REDACTED] case, so Members were fully briefed and aware of the key learning points.

6. PROGRESS ON KEY DEVELOPMENTS WITHIN DASS/ADULT SAFEGUARDING PARTNERSHIP BOARD

A report by the Principal Manager – Safeguarding outlined the local action and developments taken to develop a framework where there would be joint learning across children and adults and greater connectivity between the two departments to secure improved practice in safeguarding. Members noted the detail of the key areas of development which were as follows:

- Developing a set of multi – agency procedures

- Serious Case Reviews/Critical Incidents
- Adult Safeguarding Partnership Board
- Adults Safeguarding Partnership Board Annual Report and Plan
- Safeguarding Training Plan

The Interim Director of Adult Social Services informed that in November 2010 it had been decided to bring together the Council's approach to Children and Adults Safeguarding. It was considered that some key aspects of work in Children's Services could be transferable quickly. There was great merit in bringing the two together, initially on an interim basis. Management had now come to the view that there was merit beyond the interim. This was an area where consideration needed to be given to establishing, in the long term, a Joint Safeguarding Board. The two current Safeguarding Boards had similar membership involving, frequently, the same individuals. In the light of this, the Interim Director recommended having a common Chair person for both Boards in order to ensure as much commonality as possible. Members agreed that this was a good idea in terms of standardisation and a common approach and would bring with it a degree of unitedness.

The Children's Safeguarding Board was currently a statutory requirement whilst the Adult's Safeguarding Board was not. Members recognised that the two Boards were similar, shared many characteristics and their members had multi-disciplined expertise. However, if the national recommendation was that local authorities must have two separate Boards it was considered appropriate for both of them to meet, one after the other, on the same evening.

Members turned their attention to the Safeguarding Training Plan and discussed a proposal to hold joint Member and Officer Induction Training.

RESOLVED: That

- (1) the report be received;
- (2) the position regarding the proposal for a Joint Safeguarding Board be noted and considered again when the situation in respect of it is more clear; and
- (3) the Safeguarding Training Plan and, particularly, the proposal to provide joint Member and Officer Induction Training be the subject of a report to the next meeting of the Group on 20 July 2011.