

**MINUTES OF THE CHILDREN'S SAFEGUARDING POLICY AND PRACTICE ADVISORY COMMITTEE**

**THURSDAY, 21 MARCH 2013**

Councillors Stewart(Chair), Adamou, Bull, Scott, Allison, Hilary Corrick

Apologies Councillor Bull, Councillor Scott.

Also Present: Councillor Waters, Libby Blake, Marion Wheeler, Lisa Blundell, Chrissy Austin, Arantza Faiges

MINUTE NO.	SUBJECT/DECISION	ACTON BY
CSPAPC 128	<p><b>MASH (MULTI AGENCY SAFEGUARDING HUB)PRESENTATION</b></p> <p>Following the outcome of the recent judicial review, made publicly known on, Thursday the 14<sup>th</sup> March, one day after the agenda pack for this meeting had been published, the director for Children's Services had withdrawn the presentation about the work of the MASH and information sharing .The judgement had implications for the operation of the MASH and some of its procedures were likely to be subject to change. The Director of the Children's Service set out the details of the case set out the reasons for the judicial review being pursued against the council and provided the details of the final judgement against the council. Essentially, the judge had found that the section 47 investigation had not been correctly pursued by the Children's Service.The initial assessment and strategy meeting had only been completed after the section 47 investigation had been instigated. The judge had felt that, before deciding that there should be section 47 investigations, there had not been proper contact with the parents to authorise information being gathered. Information about the wellbeing of the child had been sought from the school and GP which showed no reason for investigation. This unauthorised use of information gathering now raised questions for the information sharing protocols in use by the MASH and replicated by other local authorities with a MASH. However, the MASH is all about partners sharing information in a working environment and the benefits of this still outweigh the drawbacks. The presentation had advised of the benefits of information sharing and how this was done but now there were legal questions to answer which would have a fundamental impact on how the MASH operated and shared information.</p> <p>The criticism of the judge about the completion of the initial assessment, and standards in reporting would be resolved. The initial assessment and core assessment were being replaced by the single assessment and this would greatly help with how assessments are completed and taken forward. Children's Services were now looking at how they can create space for staff in First Response to write fuller reports. Council Legal advice and advice from a QC would be sought on the collation of data by the MASH and whether they are meeting legal standards. The outcome of this discussion would be shared with the Committee at their next meeting.</p>	Dir CS

	<p>The Chair of the Committee sought clarification on whether it was only the initial decision to go ahead with a Section 47, without enough consultation that was flawed, or were there other issues as well? It was noted that the comments on the completion of initial assessments and core assessments were not good and this was specific to Haringey. In terms of the initial assessment as previously reported at Committee an initial assessment is opened on the Framework 1 system to allow information gathering to start.</p>	
	<p>The decision to go ahead with a section 47 was not properly constituted and the action taken was not proportional to the evidence in hand about the case to justify this.</p> <p>The Committee discussed the predicament of the social workers, as on one hand it could be interpreted that the action taken was overzealous but this could be attributed to the recent history of the council .They agreed that, in this case, and with hindsight the decision to precede with a section 47 investigation was not the right one. The Committee agreed that information sharing was vital part of the safeguarding process as it was necessary to identify a child and build up an understanding of the risks that the child could be subject to as this would inform the level of action to be taken by partners. It was noted that all Multi Agency Safeguarding Hubs will need to continue to collate and share information but now it was about establishing the right thresholds to determine the level of action to be taken in relation to a referral. In taking forward the findings of the judgement, the service need to ensure that this does not lead to a significant behaviour change of social workers i.e. to less cautious, to ensure vulnerable children are protected.</p> <p>Subsequent to the meeting, the Independent Member of the Committee would take forward an independent qualitative audit on the screening team and report findings to the next Committee meeting.</p>	HC