

It was agreed:

1. That the report be noted.
2. That the following further information be provided to the Group:
 - Flowchart of structures/workflows and lines of accountability
 - Breakdown of referrals from the MASH

CS.04 BURY SAFEGUARDING ACTION PLAN

The Assistant Director submitted a copy of the Safeguarding Action Plan which sets out actions being taken to ensure that all children and young people in Bury are safe and have the best possible quality of life. It was reported that the Plan had been in place and continually refreshed since April 2012.

The Plan is based on the following identified improvement areas for safeguarding services:

- The quality and consistency of social work practice.
- Strong service management
- Quality assurance and performance monitoring that makes a difference and informs management decisions
- Having the right people, with the right skills sustaining high standards

The above priority improvement areas have been agreed to ensure the achievement of the following outcomes:

- Children and young people are safe
- Outcomes for vulnerable children and young people are optimal consequent on the receiving the 'right help, at the right time'.
- Confident & competent social work practitioners
- Good quality and consistent management oversight of social work practice
- Quality assurance of safeguarding identifies and addresses performance issues

Members of the Group discussed the actions in place and progress made in relation to the Key Strategic Outcomes and the following issues were raised:

- Councillor Whitby enquired about levels and success rates of early intervention measures. The Assistant Director explained that early intervention was a multi agency issue and referred to the Early Help Team which includes Social Workers. The difficulties in quantifying the effect of early intervention was explained and it was reported that a workshop would be taking place with Early Help partners to evaluate and promote this area of work.
Michael Nugent, Interim Strategic Lead for Quality Assurance and Performance Management, referred to the work of the MASH and the increase in the number of people in place to deal with all referrals. Different tiers of intervention were now in place to identify the most appropriate response and course of action. The result of this had been to

reduce the number of cases where 'no action' was recommended, many of which had previously resulted in future re-referrals.

- During discussion of the issue of high caseload numbers, the Assistant Director referred to the 45 day statutory timescales for assessments and reported that Bury was aiming to ensure this is met in 8 out of 10 cases by January 2015. In response to a question from Councillor Caserta it was explained that backlogs were being tackled and risk assessments were undertaken by managers for any assessments out of timescale. It was reported that OFSTED recommend caseloads of 20, though in Bury it was explained that aspiring to a figure of 25 was a realistic aim.
- Members of the Group discussed the IT systems in place to support social workers and stressed the importance of user friendly systems being in place to support staff and improve performance reporting mechanisms. Michael Nugent acknowledged the need to keep developing IT systems and assured Members that performance systems were in place to provide all relevant statistical data in respect of caseloads.
- With regard to the level of detail within the Plan, the Assistant Director explained that the Action Plan was a high level document with many operation plans sitting below and feeding in.

It was agreed:

That the Safeguarding Action Plan be kept under review as part of the work of this Group.

CS.05 KEY PERFORMANCE INDICATORS

Michael Nugent submitted Quarter 2 figures in respect of the key performance indicators for children's safeguarding. Performance information was set out in respect of the following indicators:

- Repeat referral rate
- Proportion of completed social care single assessments authorised within 45 days
- Percentage of children becoming the subject of child protection plan for the second or subsequent time
- Number of child protection plans lasting 2 years or more at the data of discharge
- Average caseload in A&A and Safeguarding Teams

During discussion of the indicator relating to children becoming subject to a repeat child protection it was explained that concerns had been recognised that in 2012 a number of Plans had been signed off and closed which should not have been. In addressing this issue there had been an initial increase in this figure but Officers now felt that the number was falling back to a stable level.

With regard to the issue of how performance was measured, Michael Nugent explained the difficulties in trying to measure like for like performance in respect of statistical neighbours. Members recognised the importance of using a range of relevant comparators when attempting to measure performance and acknowledged the need to be mindful of performance/issues in other Authorities.

Members acknowledged the importance of adequate resources being targeted to deal with issues such as domestic violence and substance misuse as these were areas which proportionately had the greatest influence on the wellbeing of children in the Borough.

It was agreed:

That further detail be provided in respect of how our statistical neighbours are derived and the range of performance indicators that are measured.

CS.06 SCRUTINY REVIEW SCOPING TEMPLATE

Leigh Webb, Principal Democratic Services Officer, submitted a draft scoping template to assist in guiding the Review. During discussion of the scope and methodology for the review, Members were keen that a large element of the work involved speaking directly with staff and partners who are working on the frontline dealing with safeguarding issues.

The Assistant Director suggested that future meetings could be arranged to meet with staff and partners at their places of work to enable Members to get a feel for the ongoing work being undertaken.

Councillor Gartside requested a breakdown of the statutory obligations/services in relation to children's safeguarding.

It was agreed:

That the Scoping Template be approved subject to the inclusion of the issues raised above.

CS.07 FUTURE MEETINGS

Members welcomed the suggestion to link future meetings with visits to the workplaces of staff and partners working directly in the field of Children's Safeguarding.

It was agreed:

That future meetings of this Group take place as follows:

- Tuesday 9th December 2014 (5pm) – Venue – MASH
- Monday 3rd February 2015 (5pm)– Venue – Advice and Assessment Section (3KP)
- Monday 9th March 2015 – venue TBA

COUNCILLOR S SOUTHWORTH
Chair

(Note: the meeting started at 6. pm and ended at 7.50pm)