

WARDS AFFECTED: ALL	ITEM No.
REPORT OF: Children's Safeguarding Overview Project Group CONTACT OFFICER: Leigh Webb - Principal Democratic Services Officer	
TITLE: INTERIM REPORT – March 2015	

1.0 INTRODUCTION FROM THE CHAIR- COUNCILLOR SOUTHWORTH

- 1.1 Effective safeguarding of children and young people depends on a lot of people in many different roles and organisations working together in partnership. All have an important contribution to make, and the chain can only be as strong as its weakest link. The Working Group has met a wide variety of people in the Council and its partner organisations during this review. We have been re-assured by their commendable sense of partnership, and the universal commitment of everyone to do their very best to safeguard children and young people in the Borough. Whilst acknowledging that no system, however well resourced, can guarantee there will never be instances of children and young people being harmed, a key driver for the Group has been to seek assurances on the processes in place and offer challenge to Senior Officers and practitioners.
- 1.2 The Children's Safeguarding Overview Project Group was asked to review the issues surrounding safeguarding of children and young people with a view to reporting back its findings to the Overview and Scrutiny Committee. The research carried out to date has involved both the examination of technical performance information and in depth questioning and explanation from those actually delivering services on the ground. A useful and pleasing element of the review to date has been building up a picture of how the relevant partners interact, and the challenges faced on a daily basis by staff tasked with protecting some of the most vulnerable people in our society.
- 1.3 This has been a positive and very interesting Scrutiny review to date and it has greatly added to the knowledge and understanding of the Members of the Project Group who have built up a detailed overview of the procedures and processes in place and the issues faced by staff. Going forward it is hoped that focussing in on specific areas will allow

the Group to identify potential recommendations that will support and improve the quality of safeguarding outcomes within the Borough.

- 1.4 There has from early on in the review been a recognition that to time limit a review in to such a vital service area would not be appropriate and the recommendations in this interim report bear out this conclusion.
- 1.5 Finally, I would like to thank the staff and other Elected Members of the Overview Project Group for their attendance at the meetings and visits and their input into the work of the Group.

2.0 PURPOSE OF REPORT

- 2.1 To inform Members of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee of the work, findings and recommendations of the Children's Safeguarding Overview Project Group.

3.0 BACKGROUND

- 3.1 As part of its work programme for 2014/15 the Overview and Scrutiny Committee requested that an Overview Project Group be established to review and consider the following:-

Children's Safeguarding - (outline scope to monitor and challenge performance in relation to the Single Inspection Framework (SIF) Action Plan)

- 3.2 The Membership of the Group comprised of Councillor S Southworth (Chair), Councillors R Caserta, I Gartside, D Jones, S Kerrison, N Parnell and M Whitby.
- 3.3 The Project Group was delegated to agree its own project plan which widened the initial scope of the review to include oversight of the multi agency work associated with safeguarding children and young people. A copy of the Project Plan is set out at Appendix 1 to the report.

4.0 METHODOLOGY

- 4.1 The Group has met on the following occasions:-

4 November 2014
9 December 2014
3 February 2015
9 March 2015

- 4.2 Members of the Group also attended visits to the Multi Agency Safeguarding Hub (MASH) and visited the Advice and Assessment Team within Knowsley Place.

4.3 Evidence to assist the Group has been provided from a number of Senior Officers and practitioners, through both written reports and interview sessions, including:

- Jackie Gower – Assistant Director Safeguarding and Social Care
- Martyn Burrell (Strategic Lead – Safeguarding)
- Mike Nugent (Interim Strategic Lead for Quality Assurance and Performance Management)
- Mike Cross (Operation Manager – Youth Offending Team)
- Lisa Bell (Manager MASH/CSE Team)
- Rhiannon Parker (Social Worker – new recruit)
- Leigh Garside (Social Worker – new recruit)
- Sarah Bowden (Social Worker – new recruit)

5.0 WORK UNDERTAKEN BY THE GROUP

5.1 Multi Agency Safeguarding Hub

5.2 In considering the issue of safeguarding children, the Group recognised the importance of effective multi-agency working and information sharing in order to secure improved safeguarding outcomes.

5.3 A meeting was held at Bury's Multi Agency Safeguarding Hub (MASH), to enable Members of the Group to gain an understanding of the work undertaken and directly question staff on the issues faced on a daily basis.

5.4 The MASH was set up to increase the level of protection for Adults and Children, offering a single point of contact for professionals and the public. The Hub is located at Bury Police Station with co-located services including Education, Health, Children's Services, Police, Probation and Housing. Information is able to be effectively shared between agencies to ensure a co-ordinated and consistent response.

5.5 Lisa Bell, Interim Team Manager, provided the Group with an overview of the work of the MASH including the following benefits as a result of a multi agency approach to safeguarding:

- Seamless service centred on individual needs
- Greater emphasis on early intervention
- Improved outcomes/targeted resource allocation
- Referral Management – re-referral reduction
- Community Safety

The following indicators are used to measure the success of the service:

- Early identification of vulnerability
- Packages of targeted support delivered

- Improved times between referral and decision
- Minimising referrals or inappropriate interventions
- Fewer incidents of harm escalating or recurring
- Safeguarding interventions are appropriate and proportionate
- Levels of satisfaction with the referral process
- Fewer perpetrators of abuse or neglect re-offending.

5.6 **Child Sexual Exploitation (CSE)**

- 5.7 Recent high profile court cases, local inquiries and reports have raised awareness of the extent of child sexual exploitation. The crime has a devastating impact on children, young people and their families and should be a concern for everyone. CSE is largely a hidden crime, and raising awareness of this type of abuse is essential to preventing it and stopping it early when it does happen.
- 5.8 The Group have been briefed on the work undertaken in Bury to combat Child Sexual Exploitation (CSE) including an outline of the multi agency Bury Phoenix Team. The Phoenix Team deal with cases of young people being sexually exploited and offers a joined up, multi agency approach to dealing with the problem and offers advice, support and guidance to professionals dealing with the issue of CSE.
- 5.9 An invite has been extended to the Group to attend an event being held on National CSE Awareness Day (18th March). There will be an opportunity to meet the Phoenix team, to help Members understand more about child sexual exploitation, warning signs to look out for, how to address concerns and make a referral. A number of services will be in attendance to promote the multi-agency working around the issue of CSE.
- 5.10 As part of its future work, the Group has resolved to hold a themed meeting specifically to consider CSE and speak directly to relevant staff. Members are keen to examine Bury's referral rate for CSE and gauge the scale of the issue in Bury, being mindful of the fact that the issue can be a factor within other safeguarding issues

5.11 **Advice and Assessment Team**

- 5.12 A visit was arranged to the Advice and Assessment Team sited in Knowsley Place. As part of the February meeting the Group were briefed on the work undertaken in Bury to assess referrals and had the opportunity to question staff members.

During the interviews with staff the following issues were highlighted:

- The importance of effective assessments to prevent re-referrals

- Positive relationship that exists with partners including the screening team at the MASH
- The importance of early help and preventative work.
- The prevalence of domestic violence as a contributory factor in referrals

6.0 PERFORMANCE MONITORING

6.1 Key Performance Indicators

6.2 A large part of the work of the Group has been around monitoring and examining performance data. Regular quarterly updates have been received in respect of key performance indicators for children's safeguarding. The Group have had the opportunity to monitor and examine performance data relating to the following areas:

- 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 date of discharge
- Average caseload in A&A and Safeguarding Teams

Members of the Group are clear about the importance of having up to date meaningful performance information to support safeguarding services. The Group recognise the vital role of the Strategic Lead position and have noted the difficulties in securing a permanent appointment to this role. Reviewing the pay scale for this critical position could be a means of attracting high calibre applicants to fill the role and this is an issue the Group feel warrants consideration.

6.3 Safeguarding Action Plan

6.4 The Safeguarding Action Plan 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. The Plan has been in place and continually refreshed since April 2012 and the Group have resolved to keep the Plan under review as part of its ongoing work.

6.5 Ofsted

6.6 The Group requested a range of Ofsted reports from other Authorities reflecting differing judgements in order to highlight the changing nature of the Inspections and compare with Bury's most recent report. At the request of the Group the Assistant Director provided a summary of the actions undertaken to address the Areas for Improvement highlighted in Bury's last OFSTED Inspection.

- 6.7 Bury is due to be inspected imminently and it is expected that the outcomes of the Inspection will further inform the work of the Group

7.0 OTHER ISSUES CONSIDERED

7.1 Children's Social Care - Team Structures/Workflow

- 7.2 Largely to assist in setting the context for the review, the Group were provided with details (in flow chart form) of the various teams and services within the field of children's social work. Additionally, an interim structure (from 01/05/2014) of the Children's Social Care Teams and officers overseen by the Assistant Director (Social Care and Safeguarding) was submitted to the Group.

7.3 Youth Offending Team

- 7.4 Mike Cross, Youth Offending Team Manager, addressed the Group to report on safeguarding issues in relation to the Youth Justice System and reported on Bury's custody rate for young people. Further investigation will take place regarding concerns about the distance of Youth Offending Centres following the closure the Hindley site.

7.5 Social Work Recruitment

- 7.6 Bury has carried out two significant recruitment rounds of the last six months using a different streamlined approach. The positive consequence of this approach resulted in a considerable reduction in the time between advert and offer of appointment letter and ultimately a successful intake of newly qualified Social Workers.
- 7.7 As part of its work the Group interviewed 3 newly recruited Social Workers to get their views on the recruitment process and the support measures in place. Very positive feedback was received in relation to both the recruitment process and the support offered through mentoring and supportive supervision. The Group have indicated that it would be useful to follow the journey of the new recruits as they become an established part of Bury's Social Work Teams. Additionally it is felt that interviews with longer serving Social Workers would benefit the review.

8.0 CONCLUSION

- 8.1 Since the first meeting in November 2014 a large amount of work has been undertaken by the Group. Much of the initial work has focussed on providing Members with a detailed context of the issues surrounding the safeguarding of children and ensuring an

understanding of the processes, procedures and policies that are in place.

- 8.2 Looking forward, it is hoped that the work to date can be built upon during the forthcoming Municipal Year as the Group look to focus in on particular areas. At an early stage Members of the Group recognised the complex multi agency approach to safeguarding meant that to treat the review as a time bound self contained piece of work would not do justice to the critical nature of the subject matter.

9.0 RECOMMENDATIONS

1. That the work of the Overview Project Group be carried over into the new Municipal Year 2015/16.
2. That, in order to retain the expertise and knowledge developed throughout the review, where possible the existing membership be retained.
3. That regular updates be submitted to the Overview and Scrutiny Committee on the work of the Group.

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Appendix 1

Scrutiny Review Scoping Template

Review Topic (name of review)	Children's Safeguarding
<u>Councillor Involvement</u> (names of Cllr involved)	Councillor Caserta; Councillor Gartside; Councillor Jones; Councillor Kerrison; Councillor Parnell; Councillor Southworth; Councillor Whitby
<u>Officer Support</u> (names of Officer required)	Jackie Gower – Assistant Director Social Care and Safeguarding Michael Nugent - Interim Strategic Lead for Quality Assurance and Performance Management. Leigh Webb – Democratic Services
<u>Rationale</u> (key issues and/or reason for doing the Review)	Request from Overview and Scrutiny Committee for a Project Group to be set up examine the subject area with a view to reporting back with any recommendations arising from the review
<u>Purpose of Review/Objective</u> (Specify exactly what the review should achieve)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Build Member's knowledge and understanding of safeguarding arrangements. • Monitor performance in relation to the Single Inspection Framework • Identify any obstacles to effective safeguarding, and to make recommendations for action as appropriate.
<u>Indicators of Success</u> (What factors would indicate that a Review has been successful)	Evidence based recommendations agreed and taken forward by Cabinet
<u>Methodology/Approach</u> (what types of enquiry will be used to gather evidence and why)	Examination of performance related data Examination of Multi Agency working and the role of (MASH) Interview witnesses/experts Examination of Statutory services

<u>Specify Witnesses/Experts</u> (who to see and when)		Senior Officers/practitioners (to be determined) Cabinet Member for Children and Young People	
<u>Specify Evidence Sources For Documents</u> (which to look at – national and local)		Safeguarding Inspection Framework Action Plan Government Policy and Statutory Guidance	
<u>Specify Site Visits</u> (where and when)		Visits to MASH and Advice and Assessment Team	
<u>Specify Evidence Sources for Views of Stakeholders</u> (consultation/workshops/focus groups/public meetings)			
<u>Publicity Requirements</u> (what is needed – press release, fliers, leaflets, radio broadcasts, etc)		Key findings and recommendations will be made public through Council Website /press release	
<u>Resource Requirements</u> (people, expenditure)		Staff time - preparation of reports/performance information. Attendance at meetings	
<u>Barriers/dangers/risks/etc</u> (identify any weaknesses and potential pitfalls)		Crossover into the role and work of the Corporate Parenting Panel	
Projected start date	04.11.2014	Projected completion date	