

<b>Subject:</b>	Outcome of Local Government Association safeguarding peer review – December 2016
<b>Reason for briefing note:</b>	To update Children’s Services Overview and Scrutiny Panel on the outcome of the Local Government Association safeguarding peer review which took place in December 2016
<b>Responsible officer(s):</b>	Hilary Hall, Head of Commissioning – Adults, Children and Health
<b>Senior leader sponsor:</b>	Alison Alexander, Managing Director/Strategic Director Adult, Children and Health Services
<b>Date:</b>	3 January 2017

## SUMMARY

The Local Government Association safeguarding peer review of children’s services took place between 5 and 9 December 2016. Feedback from the review overall was positive. The outcomes reflected the service’s own self-assessment and the areas for consideration identified by the team are being consolidated into the existing service improvement plan. This plan will form the basis of the business plan for Achieving for Children, effective 1 April 2017, which will be presented to Cabinet in March 2017.

## 1 BACKGROUND

- 1.1 The Royal Borough had its inspection of children in need of help and protection, children in care and care leavers under Ofsted’s single inspection framework in March 2015 and received an overall judgement of Requires Improvement. It is unlikely that there will be a further inspection under this framework for at least three years.
- 1.2 As a result, the Royal Borough signed up to a safeguarding peer review by the Local Government Association to take place in December 2016. This commitment was made in order to assess progress following the inspection.
- 1.3 Whilst it is not an inspection, the peer review is undertaken against a standard set of key lines of enquiry and the local authority can specify additional lines of enquiry. The Royal Borough requested a focus on the Multi-Agency Safeguarding Hub, the Duty and Assessment team and the SMARTness and quality of child protection plans including development and delivery. The standard themes are:
  - Effective practice, service delivery and the voice of the child.
  - Outcomes, impact and performance management.
  - Working together, including the Health and Wellbeing Board.
  - Capacity and managing resources.
  - Vision, strategy and leadership.
- 1.4 The team itself included a serving Director of Children’s Services, an elected Member, operational peers and partners from health and the police. In total, the team comprised:
  - Lead Peer: Charlotte Ramsden, Strategic Director, Salford City Council.

- Member Peer: Councillor David Simmonds, Lead Member for Education and Children's Services, London Borough of Hillingdon.
- Officer Peer: Jane Wilton, Head of LAC & Adoption Services, Solihull MBC.
- Officer Peer: Karen Graham, Assistant Director Social Care, Health & Wellbeing, Kent County Council.
- Officer Peer: Pat Elliott, Independent Consultant.
- Police Peer: DCI David Newsome, Safeguarding Lead for Hertfordshire Police.
- Health Peer: Lynne Tyblewski, Health Visitor Broxbourne Women's Refuge, Hertfordshire Partnership NHS Foundation Trust.
- Shadow Peer: Louise Smith, Adviser Children & Young People, Local Government Association.
- Review Manager: Jill Emery, Local Government Association.

1.5 In addition to the site visit and interviews with staff, partners and service users during the period 5 to 9 December 2016, the Royal Borough undertook three pieces of work in advance of the visit. These were:

- **Case mapping exercise** – the authority with its partners undertook a peer audit of four cases selected at random by the peer review team, one where domestic abuse was evident, one which had not quite met the threshold for child protection, one where the child/ren had been harmed while being subject to a child protection plan and one where children were on a plan for a second time. A report was produced which was submitted to the peer review team in advance.
- **Audit validation** – one of the officer peers visited the authority for three days in November to review a random selection of five audits undertaken by the authority in the last three months. This was to assess how effective the authority's audit process is, how well audit reports are used by managers and what action is taken in response to audits.
- **Case records review** – during those three days, the officer peer also reviewed six to eight randomly selected open safeguarding cases, in a similar way to the way in which Ofsted scrutinised a selection of cases.

## 2 KEY IMPLICATIONS

- 2.1 Overall, the feedback from the review was very positive, see section 3 for a summary of the strengths and areas for consideration under each of the standard themes. The self assessment completed by the Royal Borough in advance of the site visit was reflected in the outcomes of the peer review and there were no surprises in terms of the peer review team's findings. The team concluded from the cases that they had reviewed that there was no evidence of unsafe practice. Many of the areas of strengths identified by Ofsted, particularly around focus on children and practice within the Pods, have been confirmed by the peer review.
- 2.2 The areas for consideration identified have been consolidated within the existing improvement plan that had been developed following completion of the initial Ofsted action plan.
- 2.3 The key headlines from the review were:
- Ambitious and innovative political and senior managerial leadership.

- Political and managerial commitment to continue to enhance stability and consistency to children’s services in the Borough.
- Excellent examples of collaborative and transparent working with all partners.
- Children are at the heart of everything that is done.
- Required performance and standards need to be fully embedded across services.
- Processes need to be streamlined to support effective co-ordination and planning that meets the needs of children.
- Continue to enhance stability and support staff during this time of change.
- Staff and partners are passionate about the contribution they make for children and young people.

2.4 A copy of the feedback presentation that was delivered on the Friday afternoon is at appendix 1 to this briefing note. A more detailed report, incorporating the findings of the audit validation and case records review, will be received in January.

### 3 DETAILS

#### **Effective practice, service delivery and the voice of the child**

3.1 This theme explores how systems, processes and practice deliver effective safeguarding and children, young people and their families have access to the right services at the right time appropriate to their level of need. It also looks at the extent to which the child’s voice is heard throughout practice. Table 1 provides a summary of strengths and areas for consideration in relation to this theme.

**Table 1: Strengths and areas for consideration – theme 1**

Strengths	Areas for consideration
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Evidence of innovative practice resulting in very good outcomes in Youth Service.</li> <li>• Evidence that child protection plans are increasingly SMART and timely.</li> <li>• Strong safeguarding practices across all areas of health.</li> <li>• Pod working is improving consistency for children and young people and their families, and is experienced positively by staff with some evidence of good social work practice</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Clarity needed about the totality of the Early Help offer and the system to access it needs further development.</li> <li>• Improve the quality, frequency and recording of supervision.</li> <li>• Better understanding of children’s needs at point of entry to Front Door in light of potential over-intervention (as a consequence of the introduction of the MASH).</li> <li>• Improve quality of referral information to MASH and early help hub (Front Door) through multi-agency training.</li> </ul>

#### **Outcomes, impact and performance management**

3.2 This theme looks at how all interventions, from early help to specialist services are effective in improving outcomes and the range of services in place to meet children and young people’s needs at all levels. It seeks to gauge the extent to which performance against local and national priorities is improving and that this is having an impact on outcomes for children and young people. Table 2 provides a summary of strengths and areas for consideration.

**Table 2: Strengths and areas for consideration – theme 2**

Strengths	Areas for consideration
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Commitment to ensuring stability in management roles.</li> <li>• Evidence of routine performance data being available and increasing member focus on performance.</li> <li>• Senior management commitment to improve performance.</li> <li>• Evidence of child protection plans being increasingly SMART and child outcome focussed.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Stronger focus on outcomes for children</li> <li>• Compliance with performance and practice expectations is inconsistent and lacks supervisory enforcement.</li> <li>• Need to ensure consistent application of quality assurance framework and escalation policy.</li> <li>• Need to develop a robust learning loop from performance, audits, reflective supervision and appraisal.</li> </ul>

**Working together, including the Health and Wellbeing Board**

3.3 This theme looks at how all partners are actively engaged in safeguarding and child protection issues and are working together effectively. It also assesses the extent to which the Local Safeguarding Children Board is effective, has a business and training plan that clearly identifies outcomes, and holds its partner agencies to account. Table 3 provides a summary of strengths and areas for consideration.

**Table 3: Strengths and areas for consideration – theme 3**

Strengths	Areas for consideration
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Excellent examples of collaborative and transparent working with Health and Police.</li> <li>• Evidence of shared report and planning activity across Local Safeguarding Children Board, Safeguarding Adults Board, Health and Wellbeing Board and Community Safety Partnership.</li> <li>• Strong relationship across the school family with the local authority.</li> <li>• Training from SCRs valued by partners.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Anxiety from partners around transfer to Achieving for Children will need continued attention.</li> <li>• Progress shared ownership and contribution from partner organisations into the Front Door.</li> <li>• Local Safeguarding Children Board multi-agency training needs to be refreshed.</li> <li>• Child Sexual Exploitation and Missing operational group needs to be developed in the context of wider partnership governance and the complexity of geographical and organisational arrangements.</li> </ul>

**Capacity and managing resources**

3.4 Capacity and managing resources is focused on how the council and partners demonstrate that there is an effective commissioning framework in place, financial and physical resources are managed effectively to meet current and future requirements and there is a sufficiently skilled, trained and supported workforce across children’s services. Table 4 sets out a summary of the strengths and areas for consideration.

**Table 4: Strengths and areas for consideration – theme 4**

Strengths	Areas for consideration
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Long term sustainability and resilience for children’s services actively addressed by plans for Achieving for Children</li> <li>• Commissioning framework for the Authority (2016-2020) sets out clear principles, and confirms intention to jointly commission with partners</li> <li>• Continued investment in universal and early help resources</li> <li>• Commitment to invest in social work capacity to support manageable caseloads</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Funding arrangements and capacity for the voluntary sector needs to be considered alongside the intention to commission future services.</li> <li>• Clarity in operating model as you move towards Achieving for Children of the roles, responsibilities and delegations.</li> <li>• Assurance around managing finances within new financial and contract management arrangements e.g. demand-led services.</li> </ul>

**Vision, strategy and leadership**

3.5 The final theme focused on how the council and partners demonstrate that there is an ambitious and clear vision with explicit priorities which reflects the statutory responsibilities of partners and the scale of the challenges faced in terms of safeguarding children. It also looks at the effectiveness of political, managerial and professional leadership for children services and co-ordination with other key partners. Table 5 provides a summary of strengths and areas for consideration.

**Table 5: Strengths and areas for consideration – theme 5**

Strengths	Areas for consideration
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Ambitious and innovative senior political leadership, together with confidence in senior managerial leadership in the council.</li> <li>• Leaders are visible and accessible</li> <li>• Corporate openness to explore new ways of working as part of a longer term plan.</li> <li>• Corporate Parenting agenda is developing.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Voice of the child needs to have a high profile and exert more influence, eg consultation on transfer to Achieving for Children.</li> <li>• Continue development of the role and function of the integrated front door.</li> <li>• Continued promotion of stability across people and processes during this time of change.</li> </ul>

**4 NEXT STEPS**

4.1 The findings from the peer review in terms of the areas for consideration have been consolidated within the existing service improvement plan. This plan will form the basis of the new business plan with Achieving for Children, effective 1 April 2017, and which will be presented to Cabinet in March 2017.

4.2 The key areas of the improvement plan are:

- Delivery of an integrated early help offer and alignment with MASH.
- Missing/child sexual exploitation.

- Recruitment and retention of staff including caseloads, supervision and management development.
- Corporate parenting.
- Educational improvements for those eligible for free schools meals.
- Alternative provision offer for vulnerable children and young people.
- Quality assurance and performance management, including audit.