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**MINUTES OF A MEETING OF THE
CHILDREN & LEARNING OVERVIEW & SCRUTINY COMMITTEE
Town Hall
20 September 2012 (7.30 - 9.10 pm)**

Present: Councillors Sandra Binion (Chairman), Gillian Ford (Vice-Chair), Peter Gardner, Robby Misir, Pat Murray, Frederick Thompson, Keith Wells and Wendy Brice-Thompson (In place of Melvin Wallace)

Co-opted Members: Phillip Grundy and Anne Ling

The Chairman advised those present of action to be taken in the event of an emergency evacuation of the building becoming necessary

Apologies for absence were received from Councillor Nic Dodin, co-opted member Margaret Cameron, Jack How, Julie Lamb, Keith Passingham and Garry Dennis and Bev Whitehead

7 **MINUTES**

The minutes for the meeting held on 13 June 2012 and the special meeting held 19 August 2012 were agreed as a correct record, subject to minor amendments.

8 **MULTI-AGENCY SAFEGUARDING HUB (MASH)**

The Committee considered a report from the Head of Children & Young People's Services regarding the Multi-agency Safeguarding Hub (MASH).

The Committee noted that The London Safeguarding Children Board, the Metropolitan Police, London Directors of Children's Services (ALDCS) and the Greater London Authority had agreed in 2011 to take forward a London wide project bringing together partner agencies to work more closely together on information sharing. Poor information sharing had been a feature of many inquiries into child death tragedies including Peter Connelly in Haringey.

The London MASH programme had drawn on experience in London and elsewhere. Devon was generally recognised as the first council to have a multi-agency safeguarding hub in place with co-located social workers, police and health professionals. The Devon MASH was established in 2010 and was cited as an example of good practice in the Munro Report on Safeguarding Children.

In London Haringey brought together police with social workers and health professionals to address the poor inter-agency working that was identified by Ofsted and the Peter Connelly serious case review. Hackney had also had a co-located multi-agency arrangement in place for some time.

In Havering, agencies had been working closely together to establish a MASH in Mercury House. Progress had been very good. Although, Havering was not in the original first wave of MASH programmes, the police were now in Mercury House and health partners were recruiting to their post in the multi-agency team.

The Committee was informed that the priority areas that the MASH sought to address were as follows:

- placement moves;
- transfers to social care and the Youth Offending Service;
- service planning not being informed by young people;
- poor use of performance data, and;
- the pace of change being too slow.

The Metropolitan Police and Directors of Children's Services had signed up to closer working with the Police. Co-locating with cross-agency professionals was seen as a means of helping to streamline services and avoid duplication. Havering was restructuring Children's Services, with social care and looked after children teams coming under one management and with a shared Youth Offending Service with Barking and Dagenham. The overarching themes of the new approach were: improved participation, performance management and good leadership.

With a view to achieving the overarching themes, the triage/MASH 'pod' had been located in a refitted 4th floor of the North Wing of Mercury House. A police server had been installed along with a new IT system specially designed for MASH. Within MASH, there were three 'assessment pods', comprising:

- four social workers (including three senior practitioners);
- two advanced practitioners;
- a practice manager, and;
- two administrative staff.

There was a single assessment framework that was being used to assist staff in dealing with cases that had increased complexity and to analyse cases in line with the Suffolk judgement.

There had been some improvements of referrals overall as a result of the MASH, although timescales remained a challenge. The next step was to re-launch and extend the hospital social care role in Queens and St Georges and to improve structures by utilising new technologies.

Members asked for more information around the specific time delays in the referral process. Officer explained that MASH was fast during the initial assessment, which was generally handled within 10 days, but core assessments tended to be more challenging. Core assessments took 35 days as these could be delayed owing to various factors. Further, members asked for information relating to the IT procurement timescale. Officers responded that for the CRM, new IT was due by December.

The Committee queried who coordinated the work between MASH and the Police, to which officers responded that the Triage desk had a senior practitioner making decisions on a case by case basis. Each agency coordinated its own activity but Havering social workers would take the overall decision.

The Committee noted the report.

9 **TROUBLED FAMILIES**

The Committee considered a report from the coordinator of Havering's Troubled Families programme regarding the programme.

The Committee noted that in May 2011 Havering Council and partner agencies agreed to commit resources to the Top 100 Families programme. This arose from the recognition there was a need to improve co-ordination and delivery of services to a number of families in the borough whose complex needs were often not well addressed despite a high level of spending by a number of local agencies.

In October 2011, the Department of Communities and Local Government announced the national Troubled Families Programme, whereby Government funding would be available to local authorities based on the likely prevalence of families with specific characteristics. Troubled Families were defined as households who:

- were involved in crime and anti-social behaviour;
- had children not in school;
- had an adult on out of work benefits, and;
- caused high costs to the public purse.

The Committee was informed that Havering's Troubled Families Programme was a merger of national and local initiatives. The programme had begun by plotting the areas of deprivation to identify the top 100 families.

The Committee was taken through the process by which the troubled families would be identified. The Government had established national thresholds that included education, crime and anti-social behaviour and work. To these three criteria Havering had added its own local, discretionary criteria. For each criterion, the following was the necessary threshold:

- Education: A child has been permanently excluded; has had 3+ fixed term exclusions in the last 3 terms; is in a PRU or alternative provision or is not on a school roll AND/OR has had 15% or more unauthorised absence in the last 3 terms.
- Crime & ASB: Households with 1 or more under 18 year old with a proven offence in the last year AND/OR households where any member has 1 or more ASB order, injunction or contract, or the family has been subject to a housing-related ASB intervention in the last year.
- Work: If a family meets the 'Education' and 'Crime & ASB' criteria then a check would be carried out to see if any adult in the family is on DWP out of work benefits.

Members noted that if any family met all three of the above national criteria then they would need to automatically be on the troubled families list.

Havering's local criterion kicked-in if a family met less than three of the criteria above. Havering could use local discretion to add them to the list. DCLG had advised that Havering could consider children on CP plans, families with frequent police call-outs or arrests or health problems.

Havering received upfront funding of £3,200 per family in the first year, reducing to £2,400 in the second year and £1,600 in the final year. In addition, performance based funding, measured against each of the three national criteria was available, subject to Havering meeting certain performance thresholds. If Havering met these thresholds, then it would receive, per family, £800 in the first year, £1,600 in the second year and £2,400 in the final year.

So far, Havering had identified 170 families, with a further 415 target families. One family had 37 teams of agencies visit them, which demonstrated the importance of streamlining services and the ways in which the Troubled Families programme would tie-in with the MASH.

The benefits of the programme were listed as follows:

- the alignment of work programmes within the Council;
- the focus on priority family issues;
- a renewed impetus to fix operational problems, and;
- systemic and sustainable change.

The governance of the programme was via an overarching strategic group along with an operational steering group and then the nine separate work strands each reported to the operational steering group. The nine strands were:

- pilots;

- ESF programme;
- outcome and evaluation framework;
- reinvestment strategy;
- whole system re-design;
- commissioning;
- participation;
- workforce development, and;
- communications plan.

The remaining challenges of the project were largely centred on the ESF programme and ensuring partnership buy-in to the project.

The next steps were:

- TF partnership conference/workshop;
- develop detail in works strands and identify leads;
- confirm intervention for Year 1 cohort of families;
- governance structure and operational group.

The Committee noted the report.

10 **FUTURE AGENDAS**

The Committee stated that it would like to consider the following future items:

- A review of MASH in January 2013, and;
- To consider a report on modular school buildings.

Chairman

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