Manchester City Council
Report for Information

Report To: Executive Committee - 22 July 2009
Subject: Progress on Safeguarding Arrangements in Manchester
Report of: Director of Children’s Services

Summary

To update the committee on developments following the criminal trial of Baby Peter and review of Children’s Services in Haringey.
To signal receipt of the Government’s response to Lord Laming’s report published on 6th May and early indications of the implications for Manchester.
To report further on the current stock-take of the effectiveness of safeguarding arrangements in the context of the new Ofsted Inspection Framework.
The Report highlights the progress and challenges for MCC; the Manchester Safeguarding Children’s Board (MSCB); the Children’s Board and the developing Children’s Trust Arrangements.

Recommendations

The committee notes the contents of this report and developments that have taken place and planned for the future.

Wards Affected:
All

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<th>Community Strategy Spine</th>
<th>Summary of the contribution to the strategy</th>
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<td>Performance of the economy of the region and sub region</td>
<td>Improving safeguarding and parenting will enhance independence amongst Manchester People and support them in making a positive contribution to the economy of the City and sub region</td>
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<tr>
<td>Reaching full potential in education and employment</td>
<td>Improving safeguarding and outcomes for children enhances their life chances to access education to employment</td>
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<td>Individual and collective self esteem – mutual respect</td>
<td>Improving safeguarding will enhance children’s life chances and enable them to make a positive contribution to The City and their local communities</td>
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<td>Neighbourhoods of Choice</td>
<td>The improvements specified will be delivered through and neighbourhood focus, supporting children within their setting and local community.</td>
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Full details are in the body of the report, along with any implications for:

- Equal Opportunities Policy
- Risk Management
- Legal Considerations

Financial Consequences – Revenue

Planned spend against the £1.5m growth in the revenue budget over three years (2009-12) for the re-design of the children’s social work service.
Signals the announcement in the Government’s response to Lord Laming’s report of the Social Work Transformation Fund.
Signals the current revision of the Children and Young People’s Plan for 2009-10 and the emerging commissioning priorities to safeguard children in Manchester.

Financial Consequences – Capital

None

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Background documents (available for public inspection):

Report to Committee March 2009 – Progress on Safeguarding Issues
1.0 Introduction

1.1 The publicity surrounding the criminal trial of the Baby Peter case within the London Borough of Haringey and subsequent interim inspection of their Children’s Services by Ofsted led to the secretary of state commissioning a national stock take of local safeguarding arrangements by Lord Laming. The Haringey Joint Area Review identified a number of concerns, which can be categorised as:

Governance

a. There was insignificant strategic leadership and management oversight of safeguarding of children and young people by elected members, senior officers and others within the strategic partnership.

b. The Local Safeguarding Children Board (LSCB) failed to provide sufficient challenge to its member agencies. This was further compounded by the lack of an independent chairperson.

c. Arrangements for scrutinising performance across the Council and the partnership were insufficiently developed and failed to provide systematic support and appropriate challenge to both managers and practitioners.

d. There was too much reliance on quantitative data to measure social care, health and police performance without a sufficiently robust analysis of the underlying quality of service provision.

Practice

e. The quality of frontline practice across all agencies was inconsistent and not effectively monitored by line managers.

f. Child protection plans were generally poor.

g. Social Care, Health and Police authorities did not communicate and collaborate routinely and consistently to ensure effective assessment, planning and review of cases of vulnerable children and young people.

h. Too often, assessments of children and young people in all agencies failed to identify those who were at immediate risk of harm and to address their needs.

i. The standards of record keeping on case files across all agencies were inconsistent and often poor.

1.2 In light of the publication of the Haringey Joint Area Review, the MSCB has done some initial work to consider evidence about the picture to date in Manchester. This is as follows:

I. The MSCB/Children’s Board improved governance arrangements in 2008 to ensure effective support monitoring and challenge to service improvement.

II. The Annual Performance Assessment for 2007 and 2008 by Ofsted judged safeguarding arrangements in Manchester to be adequate. In 2008 it noted that early signs of improvement in important weaknesses need to be sustained. The capacity to improve is adequate and is getting stronger. Whilst Ofsted stated that the self-assessment on safeguarding overvalued certain strengths, overall the self-assessment of performance was considered to be sound.
III. Children’s Trust Arrangements are strengthening preventative services.

IV. There are significant workforce development challenges in some aspects of frontline service. The Social Work service has high turnover, high vacancies and heavy and complex caseloads. This position is replicated to some degree in community health services but this aspect requires further work to fully clarify the challenges.

V. The arrangements for referral to and assessment by social care staff are currently being overhauled as part of the implementation of the Integrated Children’s System.

VI. Compliance with the National Assessment Framework, the national set of standards for undertaking assessments of children and their families is insufficiently consistent in the six district based social work services.

VII. The Safeguarding Improvement Unit, including the Independent Reviewing Officers, requires strengthening to provide increased support and challenge to operational services and clear reporting of themes to MSCP and the Children’s Board.

VIII. Current multi-agency quality assurance safeguarding arrangements are sound and include the following:

- Monthly MSCP meetings with senior representation from partner agencies, specifically focusing on Serious Case Reviews and their action plans with robust monitoring through a RAG rated system.
- A new monthly MSCP Executive chaired by the Assistant Director Lead for Safeguarding.
- Six district safeguarding fora chaired by Deputy District Managers or Senior Nurses which provide real time information from multi-agency practitioners about the working of the safeguarding system at the delivery point and a local forum in which to resolve issues and report to the MSCP via the Performance Management Sub Group.
- Multi-agency audit teams, which undertake thematic audits.
- Independent reviewing officers chair all multi-agency, child protection case conferences and reviews on behalf of the MSCP and themes from this window on practice are reported to MSCP for action.
- Clear multi-agency procedures in place to escalate individual case concerns.

1.3 Notwithstanding the strengths of the above arrangements, the MSCP is clear that there are key actions required to further strengthen the safeguarding arrangements in Manchester. The MSCP and the Executive Board are progressing the following actions:

I. The development and introduction of a routine audit methodology so the MSCP can test the effectiveness of multi agency, frontline practice on a routine basis. This methodology will be developed and initially implemented in a focused and proportionate way in the early part of 2009. The focus of this methodology will be to go beyond data and ensure that middle and senior managers in all agencies have a ‘reality
tested' picture of service delivery. The findings from this will drive further improvements.

II. Collating a portfolio of evidence of the current quality assurance arrangements and their effectiveness. These arrangements will be extended to further clarify and build upon the sort of performance information the Children’s Board should have available from the MSCB on a routine and regular basis.

III. On the basis that the multi-agency safeguarding arrangements as a whole are only as effective as the constituent agencies, MSCB has asked each member agency to account for how they are ensuring their contribution to improving safeguarding arrangements in Manchester in accordance with the priorities, policies and procedures of the Board. Each member agency has been required to report these arrangements to the next board for scrutiny and challenge. Further actions for improvement will be undertaken.

IV. The Safeguarding Improvement Unit and Independent Review Officers will now routinely report to the MSCB on their evaluation and assessment of the quality and effectiveness of frontline, multi-agency practice, so as to drive further improvements.

V. The MSCB will commission work to ensure that those responsible for governance arrangements in each agency are properly equipped to discharge those responsibilities.

VI. The Director of Children’s Services will build on existing contact with the front end of the service by Assistant Directors by attending routine meetings with frontline practitioners across the six districts to be appraised of and review effectiveness of multi agency practice.

VII. A systematic case file audit will be developed following the implementation of the Integrated Children’s System and electronic case recording, which necessitates amending and clarifying ‘business processes’. This will audit compliance with national standards to drive consistency of social work practice.

VIII. The senior management team of Children’s Services will stay very close to the implementation of the new electronic information system to ensure close monitoring and resolution of implementation issues.

IX. The senior management team will further evaluate information concerning pressure on the front end of the service from turnover of social work staff, vacancies and the need to use agency staff and bring forward actions. In Manchester we are competing to attract and retain social work staff in circumstances where their role is very challenging and other Local Authorities are beginning to offer incentives to staff to move. This of course is added to a national situation, which may have deterred people from becoming social workers.


2.1 Lord Laming published his report on the 12 March 2009. Although he judged
the current legal framework surrounding safeguarding and child protection to be adequate, he made extensive criticism of the way of the way in which safeguarding is addressed and practiced. He identified lessons to be learnt and changes to be made in all services for children and families and at all levels.

2.2 He makes 58 recommendations all of which have implications for local practice. He calls for a “step change in the arrangements to protect children from harm” and identifies, as a particular challenge, ensuring that leaders of local services “effectively translate policy, legislation and guidance into day to day practice on the front line of every service.”

2.3 Lord Laming challenges all agencies to remove the barriers that currently prevent good practice becoming standard practice and to ensure that each family environment is “seen through the eyes of the child” by all agencies who must “think Family” in all that they do.

2.4 The Secretary of State in announcing immediate steps towards implementing Lord Laming’s recommendations confirmed:

- The appointment of a new Chief Advisor on the Safety of Children, Sir Rodger Singleton, who will report annually to Parliament on the implementation of Lord Laming’s recommendations and progress on safeguarding children.

- A new cross-Government National Safeguarding Delivery Unit to drive continuous improvement in front line practice across all services, and provide support and challenge to every Local Authority and every Children’s Trust as they fulfil their safeguarding responsibilities.

- A revision of statutory guidance ‘Working Together to Safeguard Children’ to reflect Lord Laming’s recommendations to strengthen policy and practice. To make explicitly clear what all practitioners and agencies need to do to keep children safe. This is due to be published in December 2009.

- A strengthening of Local Safeguarding Children Boards (LSCBs) to challenge and hold to account all agencies responsible for the welfare of children. Clarification of the relationship between Children’s Trusts and LSCBs which should in future be independently chaired. Both the Director of Children’s Services and Lead Executive Member should be a member of both the LSCB and Children’s Trust Boards. Two members of the general public will also be appointed to each LSCB to subject the child protection system to greater public scrutiny in order to build greater public confidence.

2.5 The Social Work Task Force will review the Integrated Children’s System and how it is being implemented up and down the country and how it can be improved for practitioners at the front end. The Task Force must recommend immediate measures to improve support for frontline social workers; to address recruitment and retention; and to begin to raise the morale of the profession.

3. Progress and challenges in Manchester
3.1 Lord Laming’s report is supportive to LSCBs and Local Authorities. His recommendations and the Action Plan recently produced by Government do not propose any fundamental review of legislation or existing policies. The majority of the recommendations (42 of the 58) are for Government and Central Bodies including the Children’s Workforce Development Council, Social Work Task Force, General Social Care Council and Ofsted.

3.2 The rest of the Recommendations are specific to LSCBs (4), Children’s Trusts (8) Local Authorities (1) and Directors of Children’s Services/Executive Members (2)

3.3 All his recommendations and the actions determined by Government are pertinent to Manchester. Many of them are already being addressed by the City Council, by the Manchester Safeguarding Children Board (MSCB) and by the Children’s Board and the developing Children’s Trust Arrangements at a district and neighbourhood level.

3.4 Manchester City Council

In order to support the Chief Executive in discharging his leadership and accountability for safeguarding and improving outcomes for the most vulnerable children, he and the Strategic Management Team have been fully apprised of the current national policy and scrutiny context and the strategic challenges to improving safeguarding in Manchester and the action underway to make improvements. The Senior Management Team has been informed of the following developments:

- The re-design of Social Work is progressing with the Board now chaired by the DSC with the Executive member also a member. This project is of the highest priority and it has the support of the Manchester Improvement Programme to ensure key improvements are realised in the quality and reliability of the overall social work response within a neighbourhood focus with a “think family” approach. Manchester has also hosted the national Social Work Taskforce in order to influence their work going forward to assist Local Authorities across the country. The Taskforce was made aware of a number of work-streams including the implementation of the Integrated Children’s System and the workstream for the World Class Social Work Service and Manchester Offer. This is addressing the supply, recruitment and retention of high quality social workers with a new career grade with progression governed by an evidenced based competency framework. These were key issues raised within Lord Laming’s Report. Running alongside this is a workstream to deliver the financial investment of £500k for 2009-10 which will impact directly on improving the quality and reliability of the first response to contacts and referrals requesting a social care service. This is an area of weakness that is a brake on joint working, often highlighted within multi-agency reviews into serious cases and it will be considerably strengthened over the next two months. The first of a series of meetings has taken place with the Executive Member for Finance and Human Resources and the City Treasurer to track progress and develop pathways into the social work profession that become available to local residents to raise the average resident's wage as part of the social and economic regeneration of the city. Consideration will be given to the
effective utilisation of the £57.8m to be made available to all Local Authorities from Government through the Social Work Transformation Fund once we are made aware of the settlement for Manchester.

- The findings of a Serious Case Review have been shared with the Chief Executive, the two Deputy Chief Executives and the Acting Strategic Director for Neighbourhood Services. This case vividly highlighted the journey still to be travelled in developing the whole economy of public services to “think family” and “see the family environment through the eyes of the child” and to share information and intelligence to build the whole picture of a child’s life within the family and local community. Funding has been secured to develop a Think Family approach within the council and partners. This particular case also highlighted the essential requirement for MCC to lever sufficient governance with partner agencies, especially NHS Manchester, to develop high level, needs led, evidence based commissioning priorities to expand community health provision, especially local access to high strength drugs, alcohol, mental health and domestic violence services. Neglect of children as a consequence of these issues is, far and away, the biggest cause of family breakdown, harm to children and children becoming looked after by MCC. This is a key commissioning and safeguarding priority for inclusion in the forthcoming Children and Young People’s Plan, governed through the Children’s Board and scrutinised, supported and challenged by the MSCB.

- On the 29 May the Director of Children’s Services and Assistant Director led an event for all Social Care senior practitioners and managers to prepare for the implications of the emerging framework for the Ofsted inspection of children’s services as part of the Comprehensive Area Assessment for 2009 - 10. The framework was published on 12 May 2009 following pilot inspections and consultation with the sector. Manchester will be subject to one of two types of new inspection during this year possibly commencing as early as June. There is a full inspection of services to safeguard children and services to children looked after, occurring once every three years. Given that Manchester had a Joint Area Review three years ago it is likely that this inspection will occur this year. We anticipate we will receive two weeks notice of any such inspection. If not, there will be an unannounced two day inspection of the child protection and safeguarding arrangements within our Contact Centre and social work duty and assessment functions. These new inspections reflect the “raising of the bar” by Ofsted. Evidence from these inspections, alongside more rigorous regulatory inspections of safeguarding arrangements in schools, early years and Sure Start centre, fostering, adoption and residential child care services, will enhance existing evidence taken from a desk top analysis of national performance indicators.

3.5 MSCB and the Children’s Board

The MSCB now has an Independent Chair, who has been permanently appointed. The DCS will be a member of the MSCB, as will the Executive
Member and two members of the public will be identified to become members. An ex social care HMI Ofsted Inspector has been commissioned to review the governance, structure, resource base and quality assurance arrangements of the MSCB. A report has been written and incorporated recommendations made by Lord Laming and the ministerial response. The Report addresses the areas of:

- Relationship between MSCB and Children’s Board
- Membership of MSCB and Children’s Board
- Relationship between the DCS and the Independent Chair
- Scrutiny arrangements by which the respective Board’s will hold to account at the most senior level those agencies who have a responsibility to safeguard children

3.6 The above report was agreed at a joint planning meeting between the MSCB and Children’s Board held on the 8th June, which also approved a Memorandum of Agreement between the two Boards to support mutual challenge and accountability for improving safeguarding as one of the five outcomes from Every Child Matters.

3.7 The Executive of the MSCB has produced a Business Plan for 2009-10 proposing that the priority for this year is to improve the recognition, referral and response to harm, resulting in improved and more reliable multi-agency safeguarding practice. The plan has nine strategic aims which address the key recommendations from Lord Laming’s report. This draft plan will be presented to the MSCB later this month and once agreed, called in for scrutiny and challenge by the Children’s Board. The Executive of the MSCB will be held to account for the delivery of the critical success factors in the Business Plan. The Executive is supported by a series of multi-agency working groups who will adopt a task and finish approach so as to ensure improved practice becomes standard practice.

4. Children’s Trust Arrangements and impact on multi-agency safeguarding practice

4.1 Good governance has to be effective in improving practice and service delivery on the ground. Effective partnership working and good working relationships at the front-end of the services is the aspect most crucial to the delivery of all of the recommendations from Lord Laming’s Report. In Manchester, through the developments of the six District Service Delivery Model with a neighbourhood focus we continue to make steady and significant progress in developing local partnership working arrangements to support children and families in need. Below are three areas where there is evidence of the benefits of local multi-agency arrangements.

4.2 The implementation of Common Assessment Framework (CAF) is crucial in identifying early preventative support to children in need. Much progress has been made on the use of CAF by professionals with established CAF Steering
Groups in each District supported by six CAF co-ordinators. The numbers of completed CAFs has increased from 58 as at April 2008 to 653 as at March 2009. Evidence is beginning to suggest that the CAF is beginning to improve outcomes. Re-referrals to social care for targeted safeguarding services are very gradually reducing. This demonstrates effective preventative multi agency working in identifying children’s needs before they escalate. Progress in this important area will be maintained. To supplement this, six Children in Need co-ordinators have recently been appointed. They provide a case planning and quality assurance function to ensure those children who have been identified as in need of some targeted support have a clear multi agency plan of action with an identified Lead Professional. Early feed-back from partner agencies is very supportive and this will be kept under review.

4.3 There is a good domestic abuse strategy in place for the city, which ensures the coordination of a range of services to support the survivors of domestic abuse and their families. This is supported through MARAC (Multi Agency Risk Assessment Conference) led by Greater Manchester Police, in identifying the most high-risk survivors and ensuring multi agency risk offender assessments are in place. There are strong links between MARAC and the Child Protection Case Conferencing System to ensure a coordinated approach in safeguarding children whilst targeting serious offenders. The Independent Domestic Violence Advice Service (IDVA) service led by Probation was set up 12 months ago and provides advice, information and support to survivors of violence or abuse from intimate partners or family members, living in the community. This includes exploring the range, effectiveness and suitability of options to improve victims’ safety and that of their children.

4.4 The Protect Team based at Grey Mare Lane Police Station is an innovative multi agency Team comprising of police officers, social workers and voluntary sector workers who provide a dedicated service to children involved in sexual exploitation to ensure they are protected and perpetrators are proactively prosecuted. Workers provide intensive support to ensure you people have sustained support in exiting the abusive relationships they are in. The Team has received national recognition with members of the Northern Ireland Assembly recently visiting with the plan to role out a similar programme across the Province.

4.5 A well-attended Children’s Trust partnership event on safeguarding was held in April to consider the role of the extended services in schools and share good and new practice in the districts. Compelling examples were presented by Head teachers and others of improved care, support and guidance, learning from Serious Case Reviews and Social Work providing consultation and support directly into schools. Further similar events will be held to disseminate good practice across the city and to build on progress to date.

5. Conclusion

5.1 Improving governance arrangements between the Council, the Children’s Board and the MSCB are more effectively translating “policy, legislation and guidance into day to day practice on the front line of services” as Lord Laming’s report rightly requires. The recommendations and implications of his
report are increasingly becoming embedded into the overall programme to safeguard vulnerable children in Manchester. Much work has been done and is planned with MCC, the Children’s Board, and the MSCB to ensure all agencies at the highest level are held accountable for addressing the causes of harm to children and the effectiveness of services to protect those at risk of harm. The report proposes that much is being achieved and there is much to be done. The new external performance assessment framework is likely to reflect the aforementioned progress and challenges. Any self-evaluation of the overall judgement by Ofsted on the effectiveness of the multi agency safeguarding arrangements is inevitably somewhat speculative but current outcomes and evidence suggest it is unlikely to be judged better than adequate with clear signs of improvement.