

Committee: Health and Wellbeing Board

Date: 23 June 2015

Agenda item:

Wards:

Subject: Information Sharing to Support Children's Safeguarding & Protection

Lead officer: Yvette Stanley, Director of Children, Schools and Families

Lead member: Councillor Maxi Martin, Cabinet Member for Children's Services

Forward Plan reference number:

Contact officer: Paul Angeli, Assistant Director, Children's Social Care and Youth Inclusion

Recommendations:

- A. That all Merton Partnership Board and Sub Board members commit to continuing to ensuring that their agencies are compliant with legislation and good practice.
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1 PURPOSE OF REPORT AND EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

- 1.1. To ensure that all Merton Partnership Board and Sub Board members commit to continuing to ensuring that their agencies are compliant with legislation and good practice.

2 DETAILS

- 2.1. Following on from a series of national child protection cases relating to the sexual exploitation of children and young people (CSE), ministers from a range of departments wrote to the Independent Chairs of Safeguarding Children Boards (SCB), Chief Executives and Directors of Children's Services advising that they would be producing simplified guidance to support information sharing and setting out 5 principles to support this. A copy of their letter is attached as an appendix to this report. The principles they outlined are:

- Integrated working;
- Joint risk assessment;
- A victim focused approach;
- Good leadership and clear governance; and
- Frequent reviews of operations.

- 2.2. These principles are clearly reflected in our local Children's Trust values:

- Keeping the child/young person at the heart of our work;
 - Equality, equity, inclusion and valuing diversity – judged by our impact on the most vulnerable;
 - Local accountability and partnership;
 - Making a difference – quality assurance and continuous improvement;
 - Promoting a learning culture; and
 - Promoting a culture which values children and young people.
- 2.3. The Ministerial letter was widely circulated to MSCB statutory partners by the Independent Chair and DCS who, in turn, were asked to cascade it within their organisation. Further the Chair of the MSCB will be holding his annual quality assurance review with all SCB agencies in the coming months and these will include the commitment to the principles and operational arrangements to support them.
- 2.4. In late 2014 Merton SCB partners undertook a self-evaluation of their work regarding CSE as well as taking part in a sub-regional and pan London review process. The self-evaluation and the action plan has been to the SCB, the Safer and Stronger Executive, the Violence against Women and Girls Board, the One Merton Group (joint planning between LBM and Merton CCG) and LBM's Chief Officer Management Team (CMT). The partnership also marked national CSE awareness day with an all-day event in the Civic Centre attended by in excess of 130 practitioners from across SCB agencies and by councillors from all parties and senior officers.
- 2.5. At this event we launched our refreshed policy and risk assessment tool. We also heard, very powerfully, from a young woman who had experienced CSE and been supported by our commissioned services, Children's Social Care and our Promote and Protect/MASE arrangements.
- 2.6. Our commitment on the day was clear:
- "In Merton we will not tolerate the sexual exploitation of children. Sex with, or indeed grooming a young person under 16 for sex, is a crime. We will work proactively to identify and respond to the victims of these crimes as the victims they are – even when they do not identify themselves as victims because of the grooming they have experienced. We will work to identify and prosecute perpetrators and to create a climate of zero tolerance."*
- 2.7. Tackling CSE and effective information sharing is an issue for all our strategic partnership boards, with the SCB's role to seek assurance that it is afforded the priority strategically and operationally by all boards. This report is therefore going to each sub board to enable a focus on this important issue and for the boards to each consider their role in creating a zero tolerance borough with regard to CSE and to highlight the principles for effective information sharing to assist in tackling CSE and supporting effective information sharing to protect and safeguard children and young people.

3 ALTERNATIVE OPTIONS

- 3.1. N/A

4 CONSULTATION UNDERTAKEN OR PROPOSED

4.1. N/A

5 TIMETABLE

5.1. N/A

6 FINANCIAL, RESOURCE AND PROPERTY IMPLICATIONS

6.1 N/A

7 LEGAL AND STATUTORY IMPLICATIONS

7.1 The report addresses the delivery of the council and partners' statutory functions to share information to ensure children and young people are safeguarded and protected from harm.

The statutory framework for the duty to co-operate between the Council and its partner agencies is set out in the Children Act 2004. Sections 10, 11 and 12 of the 2004 Act imply powers to share information to improve or promote and safeguard children's welfare.

8 HUMAN RIGHTS, EQUALITIES AND COMMUNITY COHESION IMPLICATIONS

8.1. Improving children and young people's safeguarding and well-being contributes positively to human rights, equalities and community cohesion.

9 CRIME AND DISORDER IMPLICATIONS

9.1. Improving pupil outcomes reduces crime and disorder.

10 RISK MANAGEMENT AND HEALTH AND SAFETY IMPLICATIONS

10.1. The failure to deliver effective safeguarding arrangements places children at risk and prevents their wider well-being.

11 APPENDICES – THE FOLLOWING DOCUMENTS ARE TO BE PUBLISHED WITH THIS REPORT AND FORM PART OF THE REPORT

11.1 Appendix 1: Ministerial letter dated 3 March 2015 and response from DCS and MSCB Chair dated 6 March 2015.

12 BACKGROUND PAPERS

12.1. None

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