

THE ROYAL BOROUGH OF KENSINGTON AND CHELSEA
FAMILY AND CHILDREN'S SERVICES SCRUTINY COMMITTEE
10 SEPTEMBER 2012

REPORT BY DIRECTOR OF FAMILY SERVICES
CHILD PROTECTION REPORT 2011-2012

This is the first report of an annual reporting cycle to inform the Family and Children's Services Scrutiny Committee of child protection and safeguarding activity over the 2011-12 financial year. The report also advises on future improvement activity for the forthcoming year.

FOR INFORMATION

1. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

- 1.1 This report highlights the significant responsibilities the local authority has in relation to ensuring the protection of children, and how it discharges these. Section 3 outlines the parenting factors, legal context and child protection process, whilst section 4 benchmarks key activity and performance data.
- 1.2 The numbers and profile of those in the child protection system is regularly monitored and this report indicates that the balance between safeguarding children and over intrusion in families' lives is appropriately maintained. However an area being addressed is the relative high number of children with 'second time' child protection plans, requiring an examination of decision making and the provision of support services to these families.
- 1.3 Finally, Section 6 summarises the work programme for this year, influenced by both national and local priorities and initiatives. The role of the different services is included in Appendix A for Members' information.

2. INTRODUCTION

- 2.1 This report details information about the child protection activity by the Royal Borough of Kensington and Chelsea from 01 April 2011 through to 31 March 2012. The report compares our performance with that of our statistical neighbours and provides a tri-borough perspective where this information is available.
- 2.2 The report references the work undertaken by the key frontline operational delivery teams and the safeguarding services: Locality Social

Work Teams, the HealthLink Team at the Chelsea and Westminster Hospital, the Children with Disabilities Team and the Safeguarding and Reviewing Services (see Appendix A).

3. CONTEXT

- 3.1 Whilst it is a firmly held belief that children and young people achieve their potential in nurturing and caring family arrangements, it is also an unfortunate fact that children and young people can, in certain situations, be harmed or seriously injured by their parents or carers. This may take the form of physical injury, sexual abuse, developmental impairment, neglect or emotional abuse.
- 3.2 The increasing prevalence of drug and alcohol use by parents significantly impacts on their capacity to provide appropriate care and forms a significant component in a number of our child protection cases. Increased awareness of the impact of domestic violence - on a child's concept of self, their identity and confidence - over the last decade has widened the scope of child protection to include those children affected. Parental mental ill health is often also a feature of these cases. Overall however, the number of children who are in need of protection remains relatively low to the total child population.
- 3.3 The legal duties and responsibilities of the Local Authority in respect to the protection of children are set out in the Children Act (1989). London Child Protection Procedures provide the statutory regulations and guidance by which all professionals working with children should abide. The Local Authority has a duty to investigate and initiate Section 47 (child protection) enquires when there is a concern that a child is suffering or likely to suffer significant harm.
- 3.4 Child Protection involves the identification and multi-agency assessment of the care provided to children and young people who may be at risk of harm from their parents or carers, together with the development of a plan to reduce the risk of harm to those children by the coordination and provision of services. Child protection also requires the continuous monitoring of the effectiveness of this plan, and prompt action to seek legal advice to consider the removal of children via the application for a court order in those circumstances where the level of risk cannot be satisfactorily mitigated.
- 3.5 The services primarily involved in child protection work in the borough are explained in Appendix A.

4. CHILD PROTECTION ACTIVITY 2011-12

- 4.1 In the financial year ending 31 March 2012, Family Services received 2022 referrals of children considered in need or in need of protection. Of these referrals, 1536 lead to Initial Assessments (IA), which in turn lead to 859 Core Assessments (CA), undertaken within the year. (Initial

Assessments are undertaken with 10 working days and constitute a preliminary fact find and risk assessment, and Core Assessments are much more complex multi-agency pieces of work which take up to a further 35 days to complete).

4.2 Where child protection concerns are identified a core child protection assessment, also known as a Section 47 investigation (Children Act 1989), will be completed by a qualified social worker. During 2011/12, 115 Initial Child Protection Conferences (ICPC) were convened as a result of a Section 47 investigation documenting high safeguarding concerns. Just under one-third (30.4 percent) of Section 47 investigations/assessment in 2011-12 led to an ICPC.

4.3 On the 31 March 2012 there were 79 children subject to a child protection plan. The number of children subject of a plan on 31 March 2012 was lower than the previous year (decrease of 13 children). The table below provides the comparative data rates shown per 10,000 children from 2007 to 2012:

CP Plans open at Year end per 10,000 children	2007-08	2008-09	2009-10	2010-11	2011-12
RBKC	18.5	24.4	28.9	30.4	26.1
LBHF	47.0	54.9	74.9	48.6	42.0
WCC	23.4	39.8	38.5	28.0	26.6

4.4 The information below is based on our reported performance:

2011-12	Rate of Referrals per 10,000	Rate of re-referrals per 10,000	IA's as a percentage of Referrals	CA completed within 35 Days
RBKC	667.3	137.3	76.0%	72.3%
LBHF	532.0	87.1	93.0%	No longer measured
WCC	588.7	73.0	68.5%	No longer measured

2011-12	Section 47 rates per 10,000	ICPC per 10,000	Children added to CP Plans per 10,000	Rate of CP plans per 10,000*
RBKC	124.8	38.0	31.7	26.1
LBHF	128.8	49.8	45.1	42.0

WCC	167.0	33.6	29.7	26.6
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* At 31 March 2012

2011-12	Percentage of CP Plans more than 2 years	Percentage of CP Plans that are re-registrations
RBKC	4.6%	22.9%
LBHF	13.3%	20.3%
WCC	7.3%	2.5%

- 4.5 In comparison to our tri-borough neighbours, the rate of children subject to a Child Protection Plan, per 10,000 children, is similar to Westminster but considerably lower than in Hammersmith and Fulham.
- 4.6 The number of children subject to a child protection plan generally fluctuates during the course of the year. The numbers of children subject of a plan has increased since March 2012 to 96 at the end of June, and to 101 at the time of writing this report (mid August 2012). Although the Royal Borough has seen a steady increase in children subject to a Child Protection Plan numbers are still low in comparison to our neighbours and other inner London Local Authorities.
- 4.7 The rate of children becoming subjects of child protection plans for a second or subsequent time [re-registrations] remains high at the end of the year with 22 children out of 96 registrations being for a second or subsequent time (22.9%). The proportion of re-registrations is considerably higher than the 2009/10 rate. An audit of re-registrations has led to work to ensure that the Tier 3 to Early Intervention step-down is appropriately managed to prevent re-escalation, particularly where domestic violence is a feature.
- 4.8 It is of significant note that 83.5% of convened Initial Conference results in the child being made subject to a Child Protection Plan, suggesting that the appropriateness of the concerns and the need for a safeguarding plan is robust.
- 4.9 Adherence to timescales is important for families, and the professional network; Kensington and Chelsea is working to improve its 96.5 percent performance rate for holding of conferences within the 15 days timescales. Where timescales have not been met, the cases concerned have primarily been 'transfer in' conferences from out local authorities whereby RBKC has little power to ensure the timescales are complied with.

4.10 Performance regarding Initial Child Protection Conferences for 2011-12:

2011/ 12	No of Strategy Discussions	Strategy Discussions leading to Section 47	No of ICPC	% s47 leading to ICPC	ICPC within 15 days	% ICPC within 15 days	ICPC leading to CPP	% ICPC leading to CPP
RBKC	Not available	378	115	30.4	111	96.5	96	83.5
LBHF	622	411	159	38.7	77	48.4	144	90.6
WCC	674	339	135	40.0	100	74.0	119	88.0

4.11 The table below illustrates the numbers and percentages of the children subject to a Child Protection Plan by age range for the year end 2011-2012.

Age Group	RBKC Year End 2011-12	%	LBHF Year End 2011-12	%	WCC Year End 2011-12	%
Under 1	4	5.1%	15	10.9%	12	8.8%
1 to 4	28	35.4%	26	19.0%	29	21.2%
5 to 9	27	34.2%	44	32.1%	19	13.9%
10 to 15	19	24.1%	48	35.0%	33	24.1%
16 to 17	1	1.3%	4	2.9%	4	2.9%
Total	79	100.0%	137	100%	97	100%

4.12 The majority of children subject to a Child Protection Plan are in the age groups 1-4 years and 5-9 years.

4.13 The majority of children subject to a Child Protection Plan are recorded under the category of Neglect followed by Emotional Abuse, with increasing recognition of the impact of domestic violence.

4.14 One area of performance receiving attention is the number of children with 'second time' child protection plans (see table below). It might be expected that this will be necessary in some cases where new information comes to light or there are changes in family circumstances; however a high figure suggests the need to look at decision making and the provision of support services to these families.

4.15 Analysis of this cohort during the year has indicated that there is some volatility in numbers linked to the size of some family groups involved but also that many are subject to the impact of domestic violence; attention is being given to ensuring that children in these circumstances are not prematurely taken off CP plans and more generally to the support given to

families at this point. The development of a robust Early Help offer is seen as important in providing the support families need when they 'step down' from statutory social work services and plans for this are well underway.

5. CARE PROCEEDINGS

- 5.1 In 2011-2012 there were 12 care proceedings cases initiated in court, with 24 active cases during the year. Many of these are sibling groups or cases whereby there had been previous concerns requiring legal action in the past and in relation to previous children within a family unit. The average length of proceedings was 61.2 weeks against a target of 26 weeks and concerted effort is underway to address this (see 6.5 below).

6. WORK PROGRAMME FOR 2012-2013

Ofsted Inspection Action Plan

- 6.1 Ofsted's Announced Inspection of Safeguarding and Looked After Children Services was undertaken in April 2012 over a two week period. The inspection involved services from across Family Services and partners in Education, Health and the Police. During the same period NHS Kensington and Chelsea was the subject of a Care Quality Commission inspection.
- 6.2 The Royal Borough was given an overall rating of 'Good'. A number of strengths of local safeguarding processes and the support offered by professionals in order to make informed and effective plans to meet identified need were highlighted.
- 6.3 A comprehensive action plan has been developed to address the recommendations set out in the Report. Together with multi-agency partners, safeguarding colleagues are making considerable progress in ensuring the Action Plan is addressed and contributes to our cycle of continuous learning and improvement.

Involved By Right Project

- 6.4 The Involved by Right project is beginning to make a difference to strengthening child protection processes by increasing the proactive participation of children and young people. In the pilot period of nine months (Sept 2011- June 2012):
- A total of 113 children, subject to child protection conferences, were referred for independent advocacy support. Out of these, 59 children took up advocacy support
 - Out of those referred, 10 children (8.8 percent) attended the child protection conference; 46 (49.5 percent) were represented by the advocate; and 4 children attended (3.5 percent) without the advocate

- Referrals were accepted for the age group of 7-16 years old; the majority of children who took up the advocacy service were under the age of 12 years (84 percent)
- 50 children were supported by their social worker to complete a Viewpoint consultation questionnaire for their wishes and feelings to be considered at all stages in the child protection conference process.

The pilot study is currently being evaluated by National Children's Bureau, and initial findings will be available in November 2012, and published in February 2013.

Care Proceedings Pilot

- 6.5 A tri-borough project, the pilot responds to concerns held locally, and highlighted nationally in the Family Justice Review, about delays with the court processes in care proceedings, impacting on decision making about the protection and safety of children and causing delay in making plans for them. The pilot involves all participants in the court processes, including the judiciary, legal services and CAFCASS (independent court advisory service).
- 6.6 Key expectations of the pilot are for:
- All cases are allocated to an appropriately experience social worker.
 - Social work continuity will be provided as a priority.
 - Social workers will provide high quality written and verbal assessments and statements to the Courts.
 - Social Workers will use feedback from the Courts to address the need for continuous improvement of assessments.
 - Social workers will present their case confidently in Court, demonstrating they are experts about the children and providing expert knowledge about the family situation.
 - Social workers will provide a detailed outline of the timescale for the children in their initial submissions to the Court, with a narrative around the consequences of not meeting the recommended timescale/
 - A Tri Borough Case Manager has been appointed to track and monitor cases and provide coaching and preparation guidance to all social workers.
 - Social workers and their managers will engage in post case review workshops with the Courts and be open to critical reflection about the progress of pilot cases in reducing unnecessary delay.
 - The Courts providing judicial continuity for the cases within the pilot.
 - The Courts will not give agreement for requests for unnecessary or repeated assessments which result in delay.

Quality Assurance Framework

- 6.7 The new tri-borough Combined Safeguarding, Review and Quality Assurance Service will be developing a new quality assurance framework. The Framework will provide a more detailed assessment of the

effectiveness, compliance and management of the child protection service across the three local authorities. This will be informed by the work of the Tri Borough LSCB and build upon the quality assurance work which has already been undertaken.

Multi Agency Safeguarding Hub

- 6.8 In line with the Munro recommendation to review gate-keeping methods for children's social care, with key strategic partners in Health and the Police, a Tri Borough project has been set up to consider the possibility of the formation of a Multi-Agency Safeguarding Hub, known as MASH. The project, chaired by the Director of Family Services in Westminster City Council, will review how the three boroughs might more effectively manage referrals and share information with partners to inform assessments when children are or could be at risk.
- 6.9 The project is in its early stages with a project manager recently appointed. It is at the initial stage of identifying whether and how the creation of a MASH would meet these requirements for each of the boroughs and will be reported to Members in due course.

Freedoms and Flexibilities Pilot

- 6.10 The Department of Education's (DfE) 'freedoms and flexibilities' pilot, a national initiative in a small number of authorities, has been in operation in three of our locality social work teams since January 2012. The pilot was launched by the DfE in response to recommendations in the Munro Review of Child Protection, to reduce bureaucracy and increase professionalism whilst ensuring that social work delivers to improve the outcomes and safety of children and young people. For the three social work teams involved, the need for compliance with the Initial Assessment has been removed, with a Single Assessment in place built around an 'Initial Contact' with a family. The timescales of the Single Assessment can be set in accordance with the needs of the child(ren) and their family, with the maximum of 35 days.
- 6.11 This pilot will continue until the DfE has reported on the changes agreed nationally following consultation on the Revised Safeguarding Statutory Guidance, which includes the assessment framework. All Local Authorities are currently commenting on this proposed framework with a deadline of 4 September 2012 for submissions.

Monitoring Performance

- 6.12 The DfE is due to launch details of the 'twin set' of nationally collected and locally published performance indicators by the end of the year. These new indicators place a clear emphasis on the importance of collecting outcome data, as well as obtaining feedback from children, young people and families.
- 6.13 The new twin set of performance indicators was developed in response to the Munro Review criticisms of the current system used for monitoring

performance in child protection. Munro found that by focusing on specific aspects of process within the child protection system - as opposed to the quality of practice - performance indicators have skewed and misdirected local priorities.

Tri-borough Local Safeguarding Children's Board

- 6.9 To ensure a local focus, now that the LSCB is tri-borough, a Kensington and Chelsea multi agency safeguarding and looked after children partnership group has been set up. The Group is to be chaired by Ms Angela Flahive, the Safeguarding Manager for Kensington and Chelsea. The group will meet quarterly, to coincide with the Board cycle, and ensure that local issues are considered and discussed across agencies and where necessary local actions taken. Ms Flahive is also a member of the Chairs' Group, which meets on a quarterly basis with the Tri Borough LSCB Independent Chair and the Tri Borough LSCB Manager.

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APPENDIX A

Roles and responsibilities of local services involved in child protection

Locality Social Work Teams

There are currently six locality social work teams in the Borough which provide children, young people and their families with family support, children protection and Looked After Children services. These teams are geographically based and so take all the children and families referrals within their defined areas. All the teams operate a duty service for their designated area, as well as retaining responsibility for all Children in Need, Child Protection, Court work and Looked After Children cases. Kensington and Chelsea social work delivery is based on a relationship model whereby the work with families is maintained within the one team. New referrals are made directly into the duty contact points within each team, and where necessary will be followed up with an assessment or child protection enquiry. The social work teams will investigate a child protection enquiry and if required will convene an initial child protection conference to bring together all the relevant professionals and agencies working with the children and their family.

Health Link Team and the Children with Disabilities Team

These two social work teams are the only specialist social work teams currently offering a duty and child protection service to their specific user groups. The Health Link Team work within the Chelsea and Westminster Hospital and will address all children in need and child safeguarding concerns which originate from within the hospital. Many of the referrals to this team are in respect to children who receive services from the hospital but live outside of the Borough, and therefore the necessary liaison with the home local authority is required. The Children with Disabilities Team offers the same range of statutory services which all the social work teams do, though to families where children have a disability diagnosis.

Early Help Service

The Council's Early Help offer has existed for some considerable time but was fragmented across a number of Family and Children's Services including Family Services, Early Years, Play Services and the Youth Services, together with a considerable contribution from our colleagues in Child and Adolescent Mental Health Services. In 2011 a major project was undertaken under the Stronger Families Initiative to consider how services could be provided in the future, and the creation of a co-ordinated service has been achieved and will be in operation as of September 2012.

The Early Help Service will continue to offer a service through a variety of children's settings including schools and children's centres, focusing on delivering an early intervention and support services to the whole family as required rather than a specific child. The Service will work closely with the Locality Social Work Teams to identify the most appropriate service for a family and to also consider support following 'step down' from statutory involvement, with the aim of addressing / lessening the escalation of need.

Family Support and Child Protection Advisers

There are currently two full-time Family Support and Child Protection Advisers working within Family Services, who provide independent safeguarding advice to the social work team and multi-agency partners. The officers will advise on whether threshold for a child protection enquiry is met, chair complex strategy and professionals meetings on safeguarding matters, and make recommendations for addressing any child protection issues including the need for a child protection conference or a legal planning meeting. The officers will also chair child protection conferences. This is a unique advisory service differing from child protection advisors, as they provide input across all thresholds of need from early help to children suffering significant harm, and will support social work teams and other colleagues/professionals to make informed decisions about the needs of a child. Ofsted inspectors have continued to comment positively on this particular service.

Safeguarding, Review and Participation Service

This service comprises the Family Support and Child Protection Advisers, the Independent Reviewing Officers for Looked After Children, and the Participation and Advocacy Officers working with children looked after and those in high need. This service delivers on our quality assurance and internal scrutiny mechanisms for delivering services to children and their families at the most high levels of need. The safeguarding business support team will co-ordinate child protection conferences and ensure that provision of a chair, as well as issue all the notifications and record the minutes for timely distribution for all relevant parties.

The service provides an independent check on the appropriateness of the child protection plan and the quality of service provision. It is also responsible for providing an overview of child protection activity to inform strategic and operational planning in relation to child protection through regular audits and quality assurance work.

The service is now part of a Tri Borough service with a new Head of Combined Safeguarding, Review and Quality Assurance having been appointed in April 2012. The Head of Combined Safeguarding is directly line managed by the Triborough Director of Children's Services and is responsible for the strategic development of the safeguarding service and the Tri Borough LSCB.

Legal Services

If at any point the risk to children is so significant that the assessment recommends that a child cannot live at home, the social work teams may decide the need to make application for the removal of the child from the care of the parent/s. Legal Services provide specialist advice and guidance in making this decision, where necessary coordinating submission of the written application and evidence, and briefing any legal representation for the Local Authority in the proceedings.

Placements for Children

The Council must provide a placement for children when the decision has been made that they need to be removed from the care of their parents. Ideally Family Services would seek to locate family members or friends who may be in a position to offer appropriate and protective alternative care, but in many circumstances a placement with a foster carer will be found and in certain circumstances a residential placement may be considered more appropriate to meeting that particular young person's needs.

Schools, Health and other partner agencies

Schools and Health providers, particularly health visitors, have an important role in the identification of children needing safeguarding / child protection services and in monitoring children where a child protection concern exists. Effective safeguarding practice is dependent on all agencies 'working together'. The positive working relationship with multi agency partners was an aspect acknowledged in the recent Announced Ofsted Inspection April 2012.

Local Authority Designated Officer (LADO)

The LADO takes the lead responsibility where there are child protection concerns relating to professionals. The local safeguarding lead in the Local Authority holds this responsibility assisted by the Family Support and Child Protection Advisers, to provide specialist advice, support and consultation to all multi agency service heads. The LADO also has responsibilities for safer recruitment and works closely with partners and the Local Safeguarding Children Board to deliver on this.

The Tri Borough LSCB

The LSCB (Local Safeguarding Children Board) is the statutory mechanism for agreeing how partner agencies work together to safeguard and promote the welfare of children. The Board, which has an independent chair, comprises of senior managers from all the key agencies working with children within the Borough.

The role of the Board is to strengthen and improve multi agency participation in safeguarding processes within the Borough as well as scrutinising, auditing and quality assuring the child protection practice within the Borough.

As of 1 April 2012 the LSCB became a Tri Borough LSCB, rationalising these functions across the Royal Borough of Kensington and Chelsea, the London Borough of Hammersmith and Fulham and Westminster City Council. The main benefits of this are to strategically plan multi agency safeguarding across the three borough landscape, enabling an overview that can aid commissioning, standardising practice, improve safeguarding and minimise a high degree of duplication which has significantly impacted on a number of key partner agencies such as Health and the Police.