



Enfield Safeguarding Children's Partnership

Evaluation: October 1ST2019 – December 31St 2020

Geraldine Gavin – Independent Scrutineer/Chair

Introduction

Enfield Safeguarding Children's Partners as part of their arrangements to safeguard children are required to demonstrate that they are open to independent scrutiny.

I have been appointed to offer independent scrutiny of these local arrangements and this is my assessment of how those arrangements have performed over this initial 15- month period.

Engagement of Relevant Agencies

Enfield works through an executive group made up of the three statutory agencies (Local Authority, North Central London CCG and the Metropolitan Police). There are several Activity Groups which report into the Executive, a Safeguarding Ambassador's group, and a Business Unit geographically located within the Local Authority. The engagement of the wider group of relevant agencies is best illustrated by attendance and participation across the activity groups. This includes schools, early years and various colleagues across the third sector. Partnership Events and meetings are now held remotely.

A senior partnership leader chairing the Executive Group will begin in April 21, this will demonstrate a strong commitment to the new arrangements and heighten both visibility and co-ownership. In this transitional year, Activity Groups have met regularly and worked through their areas of focus (Vulnerable Young People, Practice and Improvement, Insights and Community Awareness).

Enquiry and Challenge

A priority for the partnership has been to ensure that the voice of children and young people is central to the new arrangements. The Young Safeguarding Ambassadors group is the first step. Their programme has been developed jointly with Enfield Council's youth support services. The group have been trained to engage with safeguarding partners and scrutinise their approach to safeguarding work. Face to face meetings were held in the Autumn with the CCG and the Police, and virtual arrangements are now in place.

A timetable of multi-agency audits driven by the learning points from case reviews is underway, overseen by the Performance and Improvement Group. A multi-agency training plan is receiving attention and a programme offered out across all partners. Multi-agency training on parental mental health and insights work into potential risks during transitions from child to adult will be developed.

A Safeguarding Practice Review is underway involving the death of a 17-year-old young man known to the care leavers team. Another case required a Rapid Review and formal notification although no further investigation was required as her death had been predicted within 6 months of birth (she died at 6 years of age). She had been born with very serious complications.

Enfield Children's Social Care has its own Centre of Excellence and runs several 'practice weeks' during the year. Partners are increasingly involved and a focus on 'neglect' followed a case review from Autumn 2019.

Understanding Performance Information

A new partnership performance dashboard has been created, hugely helped and shaped by the police in the Safeguarding Business Unit. Whilst all contributing partners have a lot of their own data adopting a shared approach with the relevant analysis can best be described as 'work in progress'. This will continue to develop over the next few months. Covid has had an impact on services and several broader issues have been identified for specific focus and attention across all partners.

Working Strategically with other Partnership Boards

Enfield partners are keen to combine when and where possible, joint adult and children's safeguarding activities. There is an ongoing focus on transitional safeguarding looking at the mid-teens to mid-twenties age range and current areas of attention include modern slavery and children's and young people's exploitation. I chair the Enfield SAB and the Business Unit specifically looks to make productive connections across the system. Serious Youth Violence, Health and Wellbeing and local member scrutiny groups all have safeguarding components and there is a commitment to work together as productively as possible.

Resourcing Commitment of Partners

Productivity of the MASA in Enfield has been much improved since July/August 2020 when both the Metropolitan Police and the CCG agreed to make some significant resourcing contributions. The local authority has always disproportionately paid far more than the other partners and Working Together remained disappointingly silent on this matter. The Business Unit now has some financial assistance from the CCG which supports partnership audits and case reviews and there is now a police colleague based for 2 days a week in the unit which has been a fantastic and much needed resource. Safeguarding is a complicated landscape and introducing changes without seriously considering the financial impact left a very pressured system potentially even more so.

Communication

A refreshed website was launched in the last couple of months and a quarterly newsletter helps the communication channels across the various partners. This needs further development and connecting between and across relevant websites is work in progress. All is channelled via the Business Unit which continues to be the engine of the safeguarding arrangements.

Conclusions

The Activity Groups meet regularly and are chaired by partnership colleagues in the main. I have continued to Chair the Executive Group in this transitional year, although this will change from April 2021. As the Independent Scrutineer I have withdrawn from any other chairing responsibilities.

This initial 15-month period of the MASA has been interrupted by the arrival of COVID with its various lockdown periods and differential tiering arrangements. Supporting vulnerable children and families during the Covid-19 outbreak is now under review with national briefing papers suggesting what has largely worked well enough and other areas where an impact analysis suggests more attention is needed. In my view it is too soon to make a detailed assessment of the MASA efficacy and impact.

Changes of staffing and pressures across all partners continue to be an everyday reality. Maintaining safeguarding contacts right across the educational sector has been a challenge and discussions are taking place about how best this can be remedied.

Whilst the arrangements do seem to be evolving well and alterations made as and when required, assessing pinch points and seeking and evidencing continuous practice improvements needs more time and system stability.

Geraldine Gavin

January 2021

Independent Scrutineer/Chair