

Information update

October 2010



SPA goes live

On 4 October 2010 Richmond Council launched the SPA (Single Point of Access). The SPA will help to streamline the flow of all safeguarding-related work into one place.

This will allow contacts into the Council about children's safety and wellbeing to be centrally co-ordinated, ensuring that callers are directed to the right place and service first time and within clear timescales. This will provide a far more effective service for partners, families and other customers we work with.

Stakeholders will benefit from a first class operation designed to give partner agencies and families the right information at the earliest opportunity allowing resources to be allocated to families without delay.

The SPA will be supported by an expert team including a project manager, a senior social worker, the Common Assessment Framework Co-ordinator and customer advisors. These are all current posts within the Council.

The SPA will use the existing Initial Response Team phone number: 020 8891 7969.

For more information contact Sarah Bright, sarah.bright@richmond.gov.uk

Safeguarding in community health

The NHS London Safeguarding Children Review Group ensures that safeguarding children forms part of the NHS London assurance framework and is key to monitoring performance across London. The group is a sub-group of the NHS London Board.

The Safeguarding Improvement Team (SIT) will have visited all 31 PCTs by November 2010. The visits promote a dialogue about safeguarding and child protection and tests how they are working across the local health community by involving senior PCT and provider unit managers and front line staff. The Chair of the LSCB is invited to be part of the process and multi-agency working is an area of practice that is discussed at all visits.

Each PCT receives a report of the findings for the visit to inform an action plan for the health economy. An additional benefit of the programme is the positive impact the process has on the peer reviewers. The reviewers have been active participants in the dialogue, and sharing of good practice has become an integral part of the process.

NHS Richmond had its SIT visit in May this year. The report from this visit has been discussed amongst relevant LSCB partners and a finalised and updated action plan detailing progress against the SIT's recommendations for NHS Richmond and the LSCB will be reviewed by Richmond LSCB at its December meeting.

Serious Case Reviews: the role of health partners

Since April 2010, all health Individual Management Reviews and PCT Overview Reports have been audited to:

- improve the quality of the NHS reports
- facilitate the tracking and monitoring of NHS action plans to ensure lessons learned result in action for continual improvement
- enable a thematic analysis of casework in London
- provide assurance on serious incidents involving child protection.

Reports regarding the nature and status of current SCRs involving NHS services are reported bi-monthly to the NHS London Safeguarding Children Review Group.

Munro Review

On 1 October, Professor Eileen Munro set out her initial analysis on the child protection system in England.

She finds that processes and procedures, and the unintentional consequences of previous reforms, are getting in the way of social workers spending time with vulnerable children and families.

The problems identified by Professor Munro in the report include:

- professionals are too focused on complying with rules and regulations and so spending less time assessing children's needs;
- a target-driven culture means social workers are unable to exercise their professional judgement;
- too much emphasis on identifying families and not enough attention to putting children's needs first;
- serious case reviews concentrating only on errors when things have gone wrong, rather than looking at good practice and continually reflecting on what could be done better;
- concerns about the impact of delays in the family courts on the welfare of children;
- professionals become demoralised over time as organisations fail to recognise the emotional impact of the work they do and the support they need.

Professor Munro also wants to improve the serious case review (SCR) process so that lessons learned can be put into practice more effectively. The government has published two research reports on SCRs at the same time as Professor Munro's initial findings. These reports show that:

- SCRs highlight important issues but there is a greater emphasis on getting the report right rather than learning the lessons;
- SCRs should look at good practice and not just when things go wrong;
- there is confusion and debate about what leads to an SCR as professionals are overwhelmed and struggle to make good decisions.

The Chair of Richmond LSCB, Tony Eccleston will be part of a London-wide group who will meet with Professor Munro and her Review Team on 11 October to discuss the initial findings of Professor Munro's review into child protection processes and the role and function of LSCBs in safeguarding children. We will be providing more news on the review when it becomes available.

www.education.gov.uk/childrenandyoungpeople/safeguardingandsocialworkreform/a0065082/professor-munros-review-of-child-protection-analysis-of-the-problems

ADCS report on safeguarding pressures

The Association of Directors of Children's Services (ADCS) has published a report on current safeguarding pressures experienced by social work teams across local authorities nationally.

The report is based on information submitted by local authorities nationwide, including Richmond, shows that there has been a significant increase over the period covered by the data collection in all safeguarding activities except the granting of Full Care Orders for children looked after.

This is even more surprising in that these findings come from a relatively static growth in child population figures.

The results provide good evidence of a national increase across a range of children's social care activities. In the two years between December 2007 and December 2009, there was a:

- 25% increase in initial contacts to children's social care
- 17% increase in referrals to children's social care
- 21% increase in Section 47 (Child Protection) enquiries
- 23% increase in initial assessments
- 20% increase in children who were subjects of initial child protection conferences
- 33% increase in children who were subjects of a child protection plan at period end
- 39% increase in children subject to Police Protection
- 32% increase in Emergency Protection Orders
- 38% increase in Interim Care Orders
- 17% increase in children starting to be looked after

Preventing child trafficking: report on findings from the London toolkit pilots

The London Safeguarding Children Board is proposing to rollout new guidance and tools across London to prevent the trafficking of children. The aim of the project is to:

- develop and share good practice between LSCBs with respect to responses to trafficked children;
- pilot the project in a number of London LSCB areas; and
- assist the integration of existing national mechanisms (particularly the newly developed national referral mechanism) with existing national and local safeguarding children procedures and practice.

From January 2009 to March 2010, seven London LSCB areas agreed to pilot the new toolkit (Camden, Croydon, Harrow, Hillingdon, Hounslow, Islington and Southwark), with a number of other local authorities across the UK also signing up at different points in the process (Glasgow, Kent, Manchester, Newport, Slough and Solihull). In total, 13 local authorities were involved in the pilot process.

If the London SCB agrees to adopt the proposed toolkit, more news will become available as to its effectiveness in identifying children trafficked and tackling the continuing rise of this activity across London.

Self-audit of safeguarding standards and duties – Section 11 Children Act 2004

Thanks to all those Richmond upon Thames schools, voluntary organisations and independent practitioners who have completed their Section 11 audits.

Schools that have not completed one yet, please can you do so as soon as possible? The audit comes in handy when demonstrating to inspectors how your school is meeting its safeguarding obligations.

For those agencies in the second tranche of the programme and who have not yet completed an audit – we will be in touch soon!

The relevant guidance and the toolkit are on the website:

For schools go to: www.richmond.gov.uk/lscb_-_information_for_schools.htm

For all other practitioners go to: www.richmond.gov.uk/lscb_-_information_for_practitioners

For more details on this contact Karen Neill at k.neill@richmond.gov.uk

Safeguarding and child protection – Richmond training news

There is a new training needs table available for schools, managers and practitioners in Richmond to assess and identify staff training needs.

You can view this and all available courses for training in safeguarding and child protection at: www.richmond.gov.uk/safeguarding_and_child_protection

For more details on training contact the Workforce Development Team on 020 8487 5345.

If you have any queries about any of the items in this newsletter contact:

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