

Deborah Brownlee
Corporate Director of Children and Young People's Services
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5 June 2013

Dear Deborah,

RE: CHILDREN'S SAFEGUARDING PEER REVIEW

Thank you for taking part in the Children's Safeguarding Peer Review. The team received a really good welcome and excellent co-operation and support throughout the process. It was evident to us all that all those we met were interested in learning and continued development.

We agreed to send you a letter confirming our findings. As you know the safeguarding review focused on 5 key themes:

- Effective practice, service delivery and the voice of the child
- Outcomes, impact and performance management
- Working together (including Health and Wellbeing Board)
- Capacity and managing resources
- Vision, strategy and leadership

Within these overall areas, you asked the team to explore the following issues to assist in your on-going improvement plan:

- Equality and diversity – visibility and practice
- Early help strategy and CAF
- Children-in-need process
- How to evidence outcomes and impact
- Impact and awareness of TSCB

This letter sets out our findings, including identified areas of strength and areas you might wish to consider further. The detail under Areas for Consideration is provided to be helpful and should not be viewed as indicating that there are more weaknesses than strengths in what we saw.

It is important to stress again that this was not an inspection. A team of peers used their experience to reflect on the evidence you presented on safeguarding vulnerable children and young people. All the documentary evidence provided to us was used in our focus on assisting you in your on-going improvement.

Trafford Children and Young Peoples Service (CYPS) made a decision not to take up the optional elements of a case records review and/or an audit validation exercise, therefore, the peer team were not able to evaluate quality of casework, care planning and supervision at first hand. The findings of the peer team are, therefore, limited to the documentation and performance data provided, interviews, the case mapping exercise and focus groups with staff and partners.

Executive Summary

We found a committed and strong partnership approach in Trafford, at strategic and operational levels. You have successfully integrated health and children's social care. There is visible and effective leadership. You have a committed and passionate workforce. Despite financial pressures you have protected budgets for children and young people, and there is evident commitment to maintaining a needs led rather than a resource driven approach.

Your frontline MARAT arrangements are highly valued by your partners, you are developing locality working and rolling out lessons learned to improve early help based on the Partington Pathway pilot and other joint working initiatives. There is a strong learning culture and we saw how this operated during the course of our review week, with issues considered and addressed. You have maintained positive trends in terms of KPIs and have a framework for reporting on these. You are beginning to implement the Munro shift to impact and outcomes, but acknowledge that you are at the early stages of this journey. A more strategic approach to the collection and analysis of impact data and user feedback would help you to plan for and further enhance your offer to children young people and their families. We feel that consideration of the needs of BME and other vulnerable groups is developing but could be further developed. Information sharing arrangements do work well in many instances, the work with the police here has been particularly successful, but there are access issues for some other partners that would warrant further investigation to see if a similar solution could be expedited.

CAF is not yet firmly embedded and there is still a hearts and minds campaign needed with your partners, to ensure ownership and clarity in relation to thresholds. You have put in place early help and stronger families pathways to frame work below the child protection threshold. Successfully embedding these developments will help you to manage demand for high cost services, and ease pressure on MARAT. In our opinion the balance across MARAT, family support teams and children in care is not yet optimised, and, although partners acknowledge commitment to and good work for post 16 children looked after, they are not as convinced that the needs of all vulnerable young people post 16 are being met within your current arrangements.

The safeguarding board has made progress over the last three years but needs to take on a more explicit challenge role, and board members would benefit from a restatement

of their roles and responsibilities particularly in terms of challenge across the partnership and in their own organisations. The interface with adult facing services (not just with adult social care but across all providers) is developing, but there is still work to do, especially in relation to enhancing whole family working and mental health.

The main strengths and areas for consideration presented to you were as follows:

Summary Strengths

- There is passion and commitment to improving outcomes for vulnerable children across the whole partnership
- Trafford MBC is a learning organisation and is focused on improvement
- You benefit from a strong and stable workforce who see working in Trafford as a positive career choice
- Your partners see your arrangements for safeguarding as a real strength and value the support and advice offered to them via MARAT
- Your Family Support Teams foster and promote multi agency approaches and locality working
- You have made significant progress in integrating health and social care and have very effective information sharing and joint working with the Police in MARAT and the PPU

Summary Areas for Consideration

- To deliver what you want to achieve, and fully embed CAF, early help arrangements and consistent thresholds, requires a hearts and minds shift
- Review the effectiveness of children in need provision and in particular 16 plus children in need services, agreeing expectations with partners and other stakeholders
- Ensure that effective working across tier 2 and 3 and in MARAT is about more than strong personal relationships
- Make the Munro shift from outputs to impact and outcomes
- Strengthen your safeguarding board so that it delivers effective and independent challenge
- Strengthen awareness, leadership and challenge from your elected members

Detailed Findings

The table below highlights the good practice noted by the peer review team and areas for consideration by Trafford and its partners:

Effective practice, service delivery and the voice of the child	Strengths <ul style="list-style-type: none">• There is passion and commitment across the partnership; relationships are generally very positive• You have made huge progress in integrating health and social care into one directorate• There is a strong commitment to improving outcomes for vulnerable children – ‘if you are going to be a child in care you are better off being one in Trafford’• You are a learning organization, this is a fundamental part of your culture and the way you work, senior managers understand and try to resolve issues that arise• Staff value the learning and development opportunities they are offered. Supervision is valued and encourages reflective practice• You benefit from a strong and stable workforce, who feel valued and supported. Staff feel that they can influence decisions – ‘people want to work for Trafford’• MARAT is highly regarded by your partners – and co-location has been a real strength. MARAT is said by all to be readily accessible for advice and information and the consultancy approach you have fostered is really valued ‘MARAT is absolutely fantastic’. Partners consistently reported confidence in safeguarding processes as well as the consultancy and advice offered to them by MARAT.• Family Support Teams (FST) have been instrumental in developing partnership working and have brought a range of different partners together within locality teams.• Local initiatives have been developed to offer early help and support. Areas of effective locality and partnership working practice cited included the SCIPs workers support to schools, the Partington Pathway, Partington Youth Partnership and SEAM.• The Stronger Families approach and the new
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Family CAF are providing opportunities for you and your partners to fully coordinate early help activity to the most vulnerable in your communities.

Areas for further consideration

- Your most recent safeguarding procedures date from 2011 and these have now replaced an earlier 2009 iteration that was still extant on the CYPs webpage at the time of the review. We suggest that you review the 2011 iteration of your safeguarding procedures to ensure that they continue to reflect the most current thinking and practice in children's safeguarding.
- You have protected and grown your social work resource but is the balance right across MARAT, Children in Care and the Family Support Teams?
- There are capacity issues within MARAT; a low proportion of contacts become referrals, and only 50% of referrals convert to IAs. It is good to provide the level of help that is offered by MARAT but there is a downside. First it is a drain on your social work resources and we feel that you need to have a conversation with partners on this. Second the very responsiveness of MARAT to enquiries may be preventing agencies from taking responsibility and making decisions themselves to manage cases at tier 2 via CAFs rather than knocking on the door of MARAT. Could the openness of MARAT to discussion actually be undermining 'safeguarding is everyone's business' as well as increasing MARAT workloads unnecessarily?
- There was a considerable (three week) backlog of NFAs requiring input at MARAT, which could be reduced if referrers had a better understanding of thresholds themselves.
- Concerns were raised by your partners that thresholds are not consistently applied by MARAT and that success in having a referral accepted can be too dependent on the relationships that exist between workers and referrers with cases being resubmitted via a different route after rejection
- Some of your partners raised concerns about support to 16+ children in need. We accept that this may be a mixed picture and add that your

	<p>partners did acknowledge that 16+ children in care were felt to receive a good service. We believe that you should test out this perception with your partners. At the same time you could work to resolve any difference in expectations around service provision for this group that may exist. If there is a foundation to this viewpoint then it would be beneficial to work with partners to provide early help to this age group so that the need for more intensive and expensive provision is minimised.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Information sharing could be improved by increasing the access to ICS across your partners. At the moment although you have gone a long way towards integrating structures you have not matched this progress in terms of integrated information systems. This is partly but not solely a systems issue. It also one of trust in terms of access levels outside social care to sensitive information. You have resolved such issues in relation to the police (MARAT and PPU) where there is very effective sharing of sensitive data. This indicates that this issue can be taken forward with other partners to achieve the same degree of effective information sharing using ICS. • Participation of young people is still developing. There have been great strides in the recent past in the way you have been open to working with the children in care council on improvements. You do have a strong Youth Council, but it would be worthwhile to review membership and ensure the youth council is representative of young people across all your communities. Participation of children in need requires development; you could make more use of school councils to widen representation. • Whilst there are strong personal relationships at operational and strategic level and partnership working is very good there is some evidence that it is over dependent on personal relationships The failure to routinely use CAFs is an example of this • There is not a systematised recording of how decisions to NFA or close cases are being taken within MARAT
<p>Outcomes, impact and</p>	<p>Strengths</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Trafford CYPS has a good reporting framework

<p>performance management</p>	<p>around its key performance indicators (KPIs)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Your KPIs suggest strong performance in safeguarding • There is a strong commitment to continuous improvement and to monitoring effectiveness. We saw on many occasions the evident openness of Trafford CPYS to consider and act upon feedback. It is clear that Trafford CYPS responds promptly to consider and address identified areas for development. • We saw emerging good practice in terms of outcome based commissioning in your service level agreements with the VSC. • The new supervision framework is encouraging reflective practice; this is important for you on your Munro journey (but make sure supervision is always recorded) • Recording of ethnicity and religion is improving; Big improvements have been made in the recording of ethnicity and you are now working to improve recording of religion • Learning from SCRs is disseminated and your action plan is monitored <p>Areas for further consideration:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • You are not systematically collecting information about the impact of interventions which can then inform commissioning. It is important that you develop an analysis to help you to fully understand the outcomes of early help and the benefit of the hoped for more systematic use of CAF; this will help to inform future commissioning of an appropriate service mix. At the moment the lack of a structured approach means that there is insufficient data on impact to quantify how services are improving support and outcomes. • You do not yet have an over-arching performance management framework beyond your KPIs. A move beyond KPIs to weave together all your information - quantitative data, qualitative information, information from audits, service user views, complaints – would provide a link between performance information, user views and service improvements • A framework for working together going forward would help you to consider and better understand what the impact of work at CAF and tier one and
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	<p>two has been to date on higher cost services and the potential for further redistribution of costs and savings. At the moment the lack of a structured approach means that there is insufficient data on impact to quantify how services are improving support and outcomes.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • You could improve the use of user feedback and views within strategic analysis and planning. There is a range of possible tools that you could develop to capture user views – happy sheets at child protection conferences, CAF closure, use of survey monkey - but it is important not just to collect but also to relate user feedback to your analysis and understanding of outcomes • You are beginning to make the Munro shift from outputs to impact and outcomes. However you acknowledge that you are still at the stage where outcome measures are mainly confined to attainment, and have not yet made the shift for individual cases. A range of scaling tools could help you to audit the impact of new supervision arrangements as well as embedding a focus on outcomes within practice. • Although there is an undoubted commitment to equality and diversity we saw little evidence of how equality and diversity was being picked up in audit and QA arrangements. It would be useful to you to put in place a more systematic way to quality assure equality and diversity practice within supervision, QA and audit
<p>Working Together (including Health and Wellbeing Board</p>	<p>Strengths:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The evidence for strong partnership working across the professional network was very clear to us. We saw the strongest commitment from Police and Health but also many examples of effective joint working and information sharing across schools, Connexions, Youth Service, YOS SNT and VCS. SEAM was but one of a number of excellent example of sharing good practice and pooling intelligence in an emerging and complex area of need. • The Trafford Safeguarding Children Board (TSCB) multi-agency training is accessible and well regarded • The new Family CAF and the Stronger Families Pathway is broadly welcomed and will help to

promote understanding of the need for whole family working.

- You are focusing on your tier 2 arrangements as part of the current revisit of CAF and reviving tier 3 as part of your SCR response. You see a flexible approach as helping eliminate boundaries that hinder push down of responsibility for doing CAF.

Areas for further consideration:

- A framework for working together, at early help and across thresholds, would be useful and help you to consider and better understand what the impact of work at CAF and tier one and two has been to date, and could deliver in the future, on levels of demand at tiers three and four.
- A debate needs to be had with partners around thresholds as we were not convinced that there was sufficient clarity on this important issue. The lack of clarity in relation to thresholds is partly because there is no overarching framework that everyone has agreed, understands and knows where they and CAF/CP fit within the system. You are developing a new document as part of the SCR response but in our view resolving this issue satisfactorily requires more than a document. It is about gaining ownership and winning hearts and minds before you agree a revised document describing the process. It would be useful to take your emerging threshold document/framework through the TSCB so that it can be agreed on a partnership basis. This will help to ensure that everyone is signed up to the revised thresholds when they are rolled out.
- Interviewees reported a general lack of credibility in the CAF process. 'CAF is not part of the way people work together'. The quality of CAFs was reported to be variable or weak. Where CAFs had been undertaken we heard anecdotal feedback that they were frequently incomplete and seen purely as referral tool.
- We are not convinced that current plans to roll out Family CAF will deliver what you need and want. CAF and Family CAF implementation requires a hearts and minds shift and would benefit from being embedded within a clearer Early Help Strategy, which we understand is currently being progressed. Without a change of

	<p>mind set about the use of CAF you will struggle to improve how people work together effectively.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• You may be missing out on an opportunity to win hearts and minds in rolling out the Family CAF. We feel you should take the opportunity to review the content and focus of the roll out training programme and prioritise ownership over the process. The design of the Family CAF training should emphasise winning hearts and minds and focus on why using CAF is important.• It would also be helpful to you to take this occasion to further clarify, within the service and with your partners, the lead professional role (which you call case coordinators). It is important that you achieve consensus with your partners, on the strategic and operational role and function of these important posts. This is a broader issue than review and improvements to the training offered to case coordinators within your roll out programme.• CAF (and the new Family CAF) require quality assurance. We suspect that your early help pathway is not routinely followed and there appears to be a very low usage of CAF by a range of agencies - schools in particular. The North Family Support Team (FST) had 72 single agency assessments but only 15 CAFs in the most recent month for which we had data.• The TSCB has to date provided insufficient challenge to partners and has low visibility in the field (frontline staff survey findings highlighted this and discussions with partners confirmed it). We have seen some examples of challenge but not to the required extent we would have hoped to see at a time when the challenge role expected of LSCBs is becoming more explicit. TSCB business planning has been poor and there has been little feedback to partners on Section 11 audits.• We found a poor interface and a lack of joint working with adult facing services (e.g. no CAFs from Adult Social Care, nor assessments looking at managing of substance misuse at tier 2.) 'Adult services are not engaged with the multi agency agenda'. This lack of joint working is wider than the relationship of CYPS with Adult Social Care and includes mental health, especially in relation to capacity assessments for court, substance
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	<p>misuse, long term conditions and whole family working. Improving the relationship of CYPS and adult facing services is currently logged as a priority for TSCB in their business plan</p>
<p>Capacity and managing resources</p>	<p>Strengths:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • We found passion and commitment from all those we met and were given very positive feedback on Trafford CYPS by partners • You have the benefit of a strong social work resource. Recruitment and retention is not an issue for you. Staff see supervision as very positive and value the support they are given. A points system to manage caseloads is a good starting point but you acknowledge that this may well need refinement. Health visitor recruitment from Call to Action is ahead of target • There has been budgetary protection of resources, although as an authority you have not been immune to cuts. CYPS is ‘lean and mean...but not when it comes to the needs of children and young people’ • You are managing to remain focused on what is needed for individual children and young people. Professional assessments and decision making are needs led not resource led. This is important and impressive in these uncertain times – and is one of the reasons why staff like to work here. • There are examples of integrated commissioning within your emerging locality system e.g. Partington Youth Partnership , where cross agency funding has assisted with managing budget challenges • Liquidlogic is well regarded by social care staff <p>Areas for further consideration:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Your strategic approach to managing demand requires further development work. The strength of joint teams and working relationships has meant that you have not given as much strength or emphasis to this, working arrangements are said to be ‘inherent rather than due to the design of the system’. You should ensure this issue is addressed in the early help strategy being developed. • An overarching approach to early help would offer you the potential to identify ways to reduce

	<p>costs at tier 3 and 4, (e.g. by a retrospective audit of LAC to see where services could have had positive impact earlier in the process, using a similar analysis to that employed within the development of the Partington Pathway for early years provision and being developed by SEAM).</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Given the continuing pressure on budgets it is critical that you maximise the impact of early intervention approaches to reduce demand and ensure that preventive support at tier 2 is as effective as possible. We found no evidence that there is a clear strategy for doing this and to inform the difficult decisions you need to make about resourcing e.g. the current children's centres review • The Stronger Families pathway will give you a chance to monitor impact and gain insight into how cases are held at the right level and how escalation is minimised. • Feedback from a number of sources suggests that you may need to address both capacity and performance systems as we suspect that children in need work has not been given a high enough priority within the Family Support Teams. Caseloads do appear high and you do not benefit from the same robust processes as safeguarding to check that children in need work is progressing. An increased understanding of outcomes from children in need work may bring a business case for investment in this as potential reducer of high cost tier 3 and 4; it will also assist you to further 'develop the market' at children in need level • We felt that there was a gap in understanding of the impact of welfare reform on individual families. If this is not known at this stage then it will be hard to target action to mitigate the impact of welfare reforms on your most vulnerable families, as well as on your foster parents and on families with disabled children. There is ongoing corporate work on welfare reform and the Trafford partnership has completed a half day workshop but it has not yet permeated to operational level. • We heard mixed evidence, and this led us to raise questions, first, about the accessibility of CAMHs (and adult mental health services) and, second, concerning waiting lists and persistence
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	<p>and follow up on DNAs within CAMHs. There appears to us to be a high rate of re-referral of cases that were subject to DNA within CAMHS. This is worthy of further analysis as it suggests that the approach that has been taken to date may not be as effective as it could be.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • There is also said to be a backlog on capacity assessments (completed by adult services) for parents for courts which also warrants further testing out to gauge the actual extent of this and the impact it is having on outcomes for children and young people. • We acknowledge that CAMHs as configured is not a universal plus, but a tier 3, service and that you are beginning to develop a new approach to early intervention and prevention across CAMHs, in the family support teams and in schools. Even if this is not reviewed and amended with Pennine Care, the new provider of CAMHs, there remains a need to manage expectations more appropriately. A potential weakness in terms of emotional health and wellbeing for you is not building capacity early enough and empowering people to do things in new ways (e.g. differential assessments to refer or deescalate). • There is a lack of explicitness in relation to the analysis of equality and diversity at a strategic level. This is a gap and does not support you to commission appropriate interventions within specific communities. Diversity analysis is mainly limited to anti poverty and an understanding of the needs of different localities, with very little analysis of the needs and outcomes for different BME or other groups that are not geographically based
<p>Vision, Strategy & Leadership</p>	<p>Strengths:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • There is a strong commitment to improving outcomes for vulnerable children across Trafford. Your CYP Strategy has seen a big shift in recent years, moving from general attainment to focus on how to improve outcomes for vulnerable children and young people. You have managed to protect budget allocation to CYPS. • There is visible and effective officer leadership, which is valued by staff and partners • Your lead council members are also visible at the front line and you have appointed a new chair to

strengthen your Corporate Parenting Board.

- There is very strong partnership working that goes right up to the Trafford Strategic Partnership. There is overarching buy in from schools and from community safety. Your HWBB priorities – obesity, emotional wellbeing – also seek to address the needs of children and young people especially the most vulnerable.
- You have decided to maintain your Children's Trust Board alongside the shadow Health and Wellbeing Board, a clear and conscious decision to ensure that a focus on children and young people is not lost with the new strategic arrangements.
- The Trafford Safeguarding Children Board has made significant progress over the last 3 years and has helped to maintain a strong safeguarding ethos in Trafford. Attendance on the TSCB has improved and a deputising policy is in place.

Areas for further consideration:

- The challenge role now expected of all LSCBs is underdeveloped in Trafford. The TSCB would benefit from some reflection on its roles and responsibilities in taking this forward and the development of a clear strategy for doing so. This may be particularly important in Trafford because it can be harder to provide challenge where partnerships are so strong
- TSCB members do have clear job descriptions but their still seems to be a lack of clarity and understanding amongst members about their role, and their responsibility to challenge across the partnership and also to take this challenge back into own organizations as appropriate.
- The business side of the work of the TSCB needs strengthening; we acknowledge there have been human resource issues that have impacted here but a clear business plan for the board and a clearer work programme for the QA sub group are both areas that should be addressed with urgency.
- Raise awareness of the TSCB; at present awareness of the role and impact of the board is low, amongst councillors, staff and partners.
- Support to the leadership of TSCB should be Clearly provided from an area of the Directorate outside of operational responsibility for Children's

	<p>Social Care. At the moment this is muddled with business support provided by Commissioning, Performance and Strategy but strategic support provided by Social Care</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• There was a lack of knowledge of new developments and communications felt fragmented. This is not just about websites, but we did not find them user friendly and felt they had too much of a professional focus. Tell the story so that everyone signs up to and understands what you are doing to ensure effective safeguarding in Trafford, what this means at all levels and what approaches and good practice you are rolling out – spreading the good news and promoting understanding externally. Voluntary services had developed websites that were more “young people friendly” these were not visible.• Elected members would benefit from awareness training, to increase member understanding of key safeguarding issues, and to make them aware of their own role to bring challenge to the system. We acknowledge that the personal circumstances of many members in Trafford, means that there are time factors and capacity to take into account. However we felt that there was not the ownership and awareness amongst members of safeguarding and important social care policy developments, e.g. Stronger Families, as would be found elsewhere. The increased expectations of Ofsted in relation to member challenge to the safeguarding system means that you would be well advised to do more work to help members take on this challenge role. You also have relatively new lead members, and a chair of your Corporate Parenting Board, who although an experienced councillor, is relatively new to social care. Their development needs should also be addressed.• We raised above the need to put in place a performance framework and a comprehensive early help strategy, owned by all agencies and to improve the focus on outcomes. Despite many good initiatives in these areas your approach is yet not sufficiently joined up at the strategic level.
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Following the team's presentation on 8th February 2013 and the answering of immediate questions, you then ran a prioritisation workshop with a wide variety of stakeholders.

We wish you well with taking your priorities forward. The Local Government Association is offering a follow up visit within the next 12 months after the peer review. This would give us both an opportunity to evaluate the process and assess impact.

You and your colleagues will want to consider how you incorporate the team's findings into your improvement plans, including taking the opportunity for sector support through your regional arrangements or the LGA's Principal Advisor, Gill Taylor who can be contacted by either email Gill.Taylor@local.gov.uk or by phone on: 07789512173

Howard Cooper, Children's Improvement Advisor in CIB, has been sent a copy of this letter and will be in touch with you to discuss the options for support and how best to share notable practice identified. Howard can be contacted by either e-mail: howard@howardcooperconsulting.co.uk or by phone on 0750 843 0056.

Once again, thank you for agreeing to receive a review and to everyone involved for their participation. In particular, please pass on our thanks to Jill Colbert and Marie Castle who provided sterling support in both the preparation of the review and during the on-site review week.

Paul Curran



**Children's Improvement Adviser (Peer Review)
Local Government Association**