



Brent

MINUTES OF THE COMMUNITY AND WELLBEING SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

Tuesday 30 July 2024 at 6.00 pm

Held as a hybrid meeting in the Conference Hall – Brent Civic Centre

PRESENT: Councillor Ketan Sheth (Chair), Councillor Fraser (Vice-Chair) and Councillors Afzal, Collymore, Ethapemi, Lorber, Molloy, Mistry, Rajan-Seelan and Smith, and co-opted member Ms Rachelle Goldberg

In attendance: Councillor Nerva (online), Councillor Mili Patel, Councillor Grahl, Councillor Ahmadi-Moghaddam

1. Apologies for absence and clarification of alternate members

- Councillor Aden, substituted by Councillor Molloy
- Councillor Mahmood
- The Venerable Archdeacon Catherine Pickford

2. Declarations of interests

Personal interests were declared as follows:

- Councillor Ethapemi – spouse employed by NHS
- Councillor Rajan-Seelan – spouse employed by NHS
- Councillor Collymore – Patient Voice

Councillor Sheth highlighted that his register of interest could be found on the Brent website.

3. Deputations (if any)

There were no deputations received.

4. Minutes of the previous meeting

The minutes of the meeting held on 16 April 2024 were approved as an accurate record of the meeting.

5. Matters arising (if any)

There were no matters arising.

6. Brent Safeguarding Adults Board Annual Report April 2023 - March 2024

The Chair welcomed Nicola Brownjohn (Independent Chair, Brent Safeguarding Adults Board) to the meeting, who had been in post since January 2024, and invited her to introduce the report.

Nicola Brownjohn began by highlighting that she had started in post outside of the timescales of the annual report period but hoped to give an overview of the work the Safeguarding Adults Board (SAB) would be looking to do over the coming reporting period. She explained that her role as independent chair was to provide an external view, completely independent from any partners, to take forward and lead the SAB. Continuing to provide an overview of the arrangements, Nicola highlighted that SABs became statutory in 2014 under the Care Act, and within the remit of SABs was to produce an annual report every year, to set strategic priorities, to undertake Safeguarding Adults Reviews (SARs) and to take forward learning. Her role ensured that the safeguarding system in Brent was established and working well, and part of her role was to challenge the partners working within the SAB. The three strategic partners were the Council, health and police, but there were other agencies involved to support the SAB including the Department for Work and Pensions (DWP), Brent's hospital trusts, Brent's mental health trusts, voluntary services, and other Council departments such as housing. In concluding her introduction, she highlighted the importance of coming together and working collaboratively.

The Chair thanked Nicola Brownjohn for her introduction and invited comments and questions from the Committee, with the following issues raised:

The Committee began by asking what Nicola had found coming into the SAB that she felt worked very well in Brent, and where she felt there needed to be some more focus. She responded that she had been struck by the positive way partners worked together. When she had joined Brent, she had some ideas for changes which had been taken forward quickly, with partners accepting them and adapting to them well. She had found very good listening and meaningful conversations were taking place between partners, and was pleased at the range of agencies involved with SAB and the commitment from those agencies. Her 'wow' factor for Brent's arrangements was the relationship the partners had with voluntary services. One of the SAB strategic priorities was substance misuse and housing, so she had visited Skylight in Harlesden to look at the services on offer there and had been enthused by the depth of knowledge of the staff and the 'built for zero' work being done. In terms of works in progress, she had found when she started there was a gap in terms of understanding the data available. The partnership was very engaged so a subgroup was being launched which would take that work forward, looking at the data and any outlying areas and taking forward areas where there might be further themes to explore.

Noting that the Chair of SAB would have experience from other areas of the country, the Committee asked how Brent compared to other areas she had worked with. Nicola Brownjohn confirmed that she did have experience of other SABs and had also written several SARs over the last 5 years. She felt that Brent was doing relatively well but highlighted there was always a want for continuous improvement and there were things that Brent could improve on. While there were areas for improvement, she had confidence in Brent's processes. Rachel Crossley (Corporate Director Community Health and Wellbeing, Brent Council) added that, to support the Board and Nicola coming into the role of Chair, Adult Social Care had commissioned an independent review on how Brent managed safeguarding both in terms of the processes and broad arrangements. The review had been positive in the processes and staff understanding of how to deal with issues and had included

some recommendations as well which had given some reassurance and enabled the Chair to have independent assurance that the processes worked and that staff had a good understanding of safeguarding.

The Chair asked how the Cabinet Member assured themselves that those processes were robust and heard that the Cabinet Member had regular meetings with the director where any issues of concern would be raised. Any urgent issues would be raised immediately through the Chief Executive and Leader.

In response to whether, as Chair, she felt all the agencies were joined up and working together, Nicola Brownjohn highlighted that often one of the reasons for needing a SAR was because agencies had not worked together in some way or had not been robust in working together. Some SARs that had been audited recently had taken place during the pandemic period, so agencies had recognised the learning from those and she would want to know what the change was now compared to when those SARs had taken place. She was now starting to receive that information from agencies who had reflected on that period and questioned when things had not gone right. Over the next year, she would go back to those agencies and back to the multi-agency group to see what the impact of that learning had been, whether any actions implemented had been sustainable, and if there was more that needed to be done.

The Committee noted that the SAB took evidence from 3 sub-groups to fulfil its duties, and asked what other areas the SAB would want to take further evidence from to help strategic decisions. Nicola Brownjohn responded that she was keen to triangulate all available evidence and build a foundation for that. One area that evidence could be taken from and learned from was SARs. Alongside that, there was also an assurance aspect through the information coming from individual agencies. In the annual report, the 3 strategic partners looked at what they were doing in respect of the strategic priorities and learning from SARs and provided that analysis back to the SAB. She was also starting to build on a third strand of evidence which was hearing from those working out in the community and meeting community groups to ensure the right people were being reached.

The Committee noted that the SAB was looking into data and asked whether that would focus on the availability of data or the type of data. Members heard that the review would be around how the Board looked at and used the data. There was a tendency for the SAB to receive a large dataset, so it was important that partners understood what that data was telling. The work would start with Adult Social Care data and dig down further. For example, the sub-group might look at data around referrals and find a certain theme such as location of abuse that could then be analysed and reviewed. That data would then take the SAB in a direction that could be learned from. Claudia Brown provided a practical example. She explained that Adult Social Care took a lead on safeguarding, so a number of agencies would refer to Adult Social Care (ASC) for a response to a safeguarding concern. It was expected that ASC would be getting referrals from all agencies but if the data showed that was not happening then ASC, working with agencies, could create an action plan around safeguarding criteria and dig deeper to see the reasons behind that and improve those relationships with agencies to get more referrals. In terms of how the partnership worked to gather and share that data, Nicola Brownjohn explained that for the annual review the data was from SARs, and those SARs were being shared at all meetings. The new subgroup would mean that agencies could

bring data into that group and if there were any recurring themes that subgroup found then the SAB could look further into that.

In terms of whether the relationship between Housing and Adult Social Care was robust enough to fulfil the Council's duty of care in regards to safeguarding cases, Claudia Brown (Director Adult Social Care, Brent Council) confirmed that there was a relationship there. There was a Joint Housing and Social Care Panel that picked up complex cases from housing and those cases were discussed at the panel with social workers getting involved where necessary. In addition, there was a high-risk panel for very complex cases, such as where the Housing and Social Care Panel might have already tried interventions that had not worked. That was a multi-disciplinary panel with health, social care, mental health representatives, district nurses and many different disciplines to move cases forward. Externally, if there was an issue in a Housing Association for example, Housing would broker that relationship between Social Care and the Housing Association to move that case on and provide support wherever necessary, and those cases in Housing Associations could also be brought to those panels.

The Committee asked how the strategic priorities were agreed. Officers advised that this was done through a range of avenues through looking at the data being presented and any common or recurring themes. The Annual Report strategic priorities had been the same for the past few years, but when partners had reviewed those priorities they had found that self-neglect and substance misuse and housing were still coming up regularly so the partnership decided to maintain those. The SARs also helped to inform priorities and one priority was around embedding the learning that came out of SARs. While the priorities had been reset, the SAB was aiming to be much more definite about what that work would look at, how it would achieve impact, and how the data could be tested. A Performance and Audit Subgroup would be set up to look at individual cases and the data coming out of that group would then go to the SAB. For example, if the Performance and Audit Subgroup found that referrals for self-neglect had reduced then the SAB would ask partners why that might be the case. The self-neglect toolkit had launched some time ago so the Performance and Audit Group would begin with auditing around that.

The Committee asked partners what more could be done by each partner so that the collective partnership was delivering better for adults in Brent. They heard that all partners were each attending the subgroups required of and expected of them, and it was hoped they could do more of that and take areas within those groups forward. Also in terms of escalation, checking what their organisations knew about escalation, whether they were aware of the high risk panel and how referrals to the panel could be made, and that partners were moving things forward. Sue Sheldon (Assistant Director for Safeguarding Adults and Children, NHS NWL) felt the partnership was working very well but one thing health could improve on was to share more meaningful data with SAB and share that data in more effective ways. Andrew Brien (Detective Superintendent, NW BCU – Metropolitan Police) highlighted he had only been in post for a few days but after speaking with Detective Chief Inspectors, his predecessors and new colleagues he had found that there was a very good working relationship with partners in Brent and agreed that one area for improvement would be around the sharing of data. All partners highlighted the importance of challenge, openness and accountability in ensuring the partnership worked and felt that was there in Brent. Rachel Crossley added that

an effective partnership needed to have good working relationships further downstream than Board level as well in order to work. This meant challenging and championing staff throughout the organisations the Board worked with and embedding those colleagues in the work of the SAB. Linked to that, work was needed to ensure the messaging on the SABs key priority areas was disseminated collectively.

Noting the different skillsets of each of the partners, the Committee queried how decisions were made and who had the final say. They were advised that when there were SARs, a multi-agency case review subgroup would discuss whether or not the case met the criteria to do an independent SAR and undertake that learning. The group looked at the case of the individual and what window of time partners could provide information on in that person's life. As such, deciding whether to refer the case to a SAR was a mutual decision which would then be presented to Nicola Brownjohn as Independent Chair to ratify whether or not Brent would do the SAR and what areas the SAR would look into. On a case level outside of the SAR process, Adult Social Care would lead that and make those decisions with input where necessary.

Members advised officers that when, as councillors, they co-ordinated operations with different agencies and there was a need for police presence, it was sometimes difficult to get police presence due to the demand pressures the police were under. They asked whether that was the experience of partners in their safeguarding operations and what the most common level of blockage was for police attendance. Claudia Brown responded, highlighting the introduction of 'right care, right person', a police initiative to ensure that police attendance to incidents was appropriate and that they were the last port of call. Police would still attend life and death situations and where there was a potentially dangerous situation. For Adult Social Care, the majority of cases requiring police attendance were when doing a Mental Health Assessment, and the police would attend those cases as appropriate. If there were other incidents requiring police assistance, such as an inability to gain access to a property, then the police would attend. As such, when Adult Social Care had required police presence they had attended. The Safeguarding Team had developed links and built relationships with the police so that when there was a case they were concerned about they were able to have that open communication with the police about it.

Noting that there had been two SARs in the reporting year, and the aim to do rapid learning and training from SARs in future, the Committee asked how that would be embedded across partners. Nicola Brownjohn explained that work would be led by the multi-agency case review subgroup. There were action plans in place so that team leaders could ensure those actions were taking place and ensure there was evidence of that. She highlighted the importance of being definite of the completion dates of those actions in order to fully monitor their impact. Reporting from the case review subgroup would then come to the SAB and if there were any concerns that some actions had not been taken then that could be escalated to the SAB Exec Group.

The Chair thanked those present for their contributions and drew the item to a close. He invited members to make recommendations with the following RESOLVED:

- i) To recommend that an Internal Communications Strategy was drawn up for data sharing between partners.

7. Brent Safeguarding Children Partnership (Multi-Agency Safeguarding Arrangements) Report October 2022 - March 2024

The Chair welcomed Keith Makin (Independent Chair and Scrutineer, Brent Safeguarding Children Forum) to the meeting and invited him to introduce the item.

Keith Makin began by highlighting the similarities and coherence between the children's and adult's safeguarding arrangements, whilst also noting the different legislation and guidance, which was outlined in the report. He advised members that the key role of the partnership was to ensure that the three statutory partners – police, health, and the Council / local authority – worked closely together on safeguarding and were well sighted on strategic priorities that needed to be developed and achieved. The partnership was also required by legislation to produce an annual report. In addition to this, the partners were tasked with ensuring that the learning and development programme and strategy was developed based on what was happening in Brent and nationally. Part of the safeguarding arrangements were to carry out safeguarding children practice reviews and rapid reviews, which he felt were developed very well in Brent. His role as Chair was to be a critical friend and ensure that challenge between partners happened in a healthy way. There was a small Safeguarding Partners Executive Group which he was a member of and a much wider Brent Safeguarding Children Forum which had a large range of partners including people from the community, voluntary organisations, education, hospital trusts and mental health providers.

Councillor Grahl (Cabinet Member for Children, Young People and Schools) added that there were some very longstanding relationships within the Brent safeguarding partnership and an institutional culture of openness and honesty, which she saw as crucial to safeguarding. She concluded by highlighting that the learning that took place within the partnership filtered through to all aspects of children's social care in Brent.

The Chair thanked Keith Makin and the Cabinet Member for their introduction and invited comments and questions from those present, with the following issues raised:

The Committee began by asking Keith what he had found coming into the partnership that he felt worked very well in Brent, and where he felt there needed to be some further focus. In response, Keith Makin advised that he had worked across a number of partnerships both in London and nationally, and one of the roles of the Independent Scrutineer was to bring experience from other places, including national developments, to make comparisons and bring in good practice. He had witnessed partnerships at different stages of development, and felt that the 'wow' factor in Brent was that colleagues had been very welcoming, open, and the discussions he had with different agencies and partners had been very mature. He had been impressed by the level of involvement from GPs which he highlighted was strong in Brent compared to other places he had worked. The Partnership Managers were also very supportive, and he offered thanks for their work. In terms of work in progress and areas for focus and improvement, there had been four

areas of development recommended by the most recent Ofsted inspection which was influencing the way the partnership was developing and working for the next twelve months. One of the areas of focus for the partnership was around working more closely with adults' safeguarding colleagues and continuing the good work already started around the transition from childhood to adulthood, with a recommendation for that transitions age range to be between 14 – 25 years old. Another focus area was around data collection, refining the data so that more meaningful analysis could take place, learning from various audits and rapid reviews to feed in to that data analysis. One example of that work being taken forward was following a multi-agency audit on a number of cases involving young girls where there had been an emerging pattern of undiagnosed or unrecognised neurodiversity, usually ASD, which had led to later problems. As a result of that analysis of the data, a priority around that theme had been established for the next reporting period. He highlighted this as a good example of working together to identify some of the issues within that theme such as the national issues with CAMHS waiting lists and the availability of specialist resource. Another area of development for partners was to engage more with children and young people across the borough and getting the lived and felt experience of children and young people into the various partnership settings. Keith Makin and partners hoped that when the annual report was presented the following year the voice of the child would come through and that the partners could provide real examples of how children and young people had been brought in.

The Chair then invited members of Brent Youth Parliament to contribute. Following on from Keith Makin's response, Brent Youth Parliament asked how the partnership planned to bring the voice of young people into the work. They were advised that the partnership had not yet worked that out as there was a want to do that in collaboration with children and young people. Keith Makin highlighted that the first stage of the work would be to engage with children and young people from all of the different settings they were a part of. One thing that other places were doing that Brent could consider would be to have young scrutineers form part of the arrangements and he had some personal experience of successful outcomes from that.

Brent Youth Parliament asked whether there were any youth representatives currently sitting on any of the groups. Keith Makin advised that there were currently no youth representatives in formal safeguarding settings, i.e. the Safeguarding Partnership Executive Group, the Safeguarding Forum, the Multi-Agency Audit Group, or the Case Review Group. Palvinder Kudhail (Director Early Help and Social Care, Brent Council) added that there were examples of youth representation within Brent in other teams that could be modelled and built upon, working with children and young people to see what would work best. For example, some groups viewed videos or listened to podcasts made by young people to hear their experiences and what they were feeling. Young people attended the Corporate Parenting Committee on a regular basis and would speak on a particular theme and run workshops for Committee members. There were also young people recruited to do visits to commissioned accommodation from semi-independent providers and who had conducted interviews for officers in the Participation Team. The Committee was encouraged and hoped for further engagement with young people in the future.

The Committee asked how much engagement with parents and families took place when it came to children's safeguarding. Palvinder Kudhail explained that when a referral was received the first step was to make contact with the child's parent or carer, where appropriate, and the assessment was then done very closely with the parent or carer, where appropriate, so that they were clear about what the concerns were and how there was a need to work together to address the issues and avoid escalation. There were some situations where some information would not be shared with parents or carers initially if that put the child at risk but otherwise the approach was very much to work with parents, carers and the wider family.

The Committee asked what other engagement the partnership had with other agencies as well as other local authorities. Keith Makin explained that there were several levels of engagement with various organisations including strong and increasing relationships with neighbouring boroughs on safeguarding issues. The Partnership Managers across NWL worked closely together and there was a Pan-London grouping for Chair's of safeguarding forums. There was also learning taken from other partnership's safeguarding practice reviews, audits and outcomes. For example, at a recent Case Review Group meeting there was a live example from another borough who had learnt a lot from a particular case that Brent's group then studied and analysed. The membership of the Forum was also broad and contributed lively discussions and presentations from various organisations. That included two lay members who made valuable contributions to the Forum and community and voluntary organisations specialising in children's services. There was also a central mailing list for communications to independent sector organisations who may not be involved in the Forum but for whom it would be useful for them to receive certain information from themes coming out of safeguarding activity. At an operational level, there was detailed activity across local authorities, such as where a young person might be in another borough but going to school in Brent or where a young person may have associations which spanned a number of local authorities. For example, where county lines was a factor and there may be victims and perpetrators spread across a large geographical area, the partnership would include all agencies who were aware of those young people and those agencies would come together to do some mapping looking at hotspot areas and common issues and draw in professionals involved with those young people where necessary. Councillor Grahl added that where she had seen examples of safeguarding issues that spanned boroughs she had been impressed at the quality of collaboration between different boroughs and agencies.

The Committee asked whether the partnership did outreach work in schools on certain topics such as bullying or knife crime. Keith Makin confirmed that there were initiatives in Brent jointly between the police and other agencies which the partnership was closely involved in. Andrew Brien (Detective Superintendent, NW BCU – Metropolitan Police) explained that he did not have any examples in Brent as he was new in post but had done this type of work previously and looked forward to progressing that in Brent. For example, working with Safer Schools Officers, he had been programmes covering knife crime, substance misuse and domestic abuse. The police had also been engaging with young people through youth ambassadors, who had created a series of videos where young people explained what it was like to experience a stop and search, which had been very useful for police officers to understand the impact of being spoken to by a police officer and then searched. Councillor Grahl added information about an outreach programme called 'My Ends 2.0', for which funding had been secured from the GLA. The

programme was being delivered by the Community Safety Team and provided funding to youth organisations across the borough working to reduce violent crime. A large amount of work on this had been done in conjunction with grassroots organisations, particularly focused in areas where violent crime was known to be higher such as Harlesden and Stonebridge.

The Committee highlighted the valuable resource of schools and school settings in helping to identify safeguarding issues and helping to prevent or reduce safeguarding incidents, including having a Designated Safeguarding Lead (DSL) for every school. Often safeguarding issues could be identified through schools from very low-level activity such as a change in behaviour or increased absences. Keith Makin agreed that education settings were a very important part of the partnership. The partnership was currently working on ensuring education partners from all education settings were tied into the partnership. There had been an expectation that the government's most recent iteration of Working Together 2023 guidance would introduce education formally as a fourth statutory partner but that had not come to fruition. Although there was no formal requirement, there had been discussions and agreement locally in Brent to treat education as if it were a fourth partner, so the partnership was working closely with someone from the Department for Education (DfE) to help bring that representative in and was speaking with education specialists and leaders across the borough in all settings, including non-formal settings such as home education and the Brent Virtual School. While that work was ongoing, there was incorporation of education establishments in the partnership through the Safeguarding Forum with many of those school representatives being members of staff with direct oversight of safeguarding within their school. A list of represented schools was outlined in the report, and the partnership also linked in with the DSL network.

Continuing to discuss schools, the Committee asked whether they were adopting a more robust approach to bullying, online bullying, and, as a direct consequence sometimes, self-harming. Members were advised that schools had very robust safeguarding structures in place and were mandated to do so, with nominated individuals who had that oversight within each school. Part of the processes within schools was dealing with bullying, which was also examined by Ofsted.

The Chair then invited Brent Youth Parliament to ask further questions. Representatives asked whether partners felt there was a stigma in relation to mental health for young people and whether the partnership was doing anything to tackle that. Keith Makin responded that he personally felt there was an element of stigma and lack of understanding around mental health issues for young people and this was something the partnership was focused on. A multi-agency audit conducted recently had identified some of the difficulties that children and young people and their families experienced in accessing mental health services as well. He felt that part of addressing that would be to hear from children and young people and families collectively in relation to what is good or poor about the system. He added that, collectively, society was not understanding the pressures children and young people were under and how that could lead to mental health problems. Sue Sheldon (Assistant Director for Safeguarding Adults and Children, Brent Council) added that there was a traditional way of tackling mental health issues through CAMHS which did not always reach all young people so work was being done to look at alternative pathways and review mental health services in the borough.

Brent Youth Parliament asked whether the partnership had a plan for tackling gang violence. Keith Makin highlighted that Zoe Tattersall (Strategic Partnerships Lead for Safeguarding Children, Brent Council) and he had met with the Senior Police Officer leading on gang violence across the borough who had described the situation across the borough in detail, which had been helpful to understand, but there was not a developed plan on tackling that yet. He highlighted this as a primary concern that the partnership would want to concentrate on. Andrew Brien added to the discussion, highlighting that gang violence was multi-faceted and the police in particular wanted to focus on exploitation, targeting those who recruited young people to join criminal gangs. If the police were able to identify those recruiting at the stem then that helped to reduce gang crime and violence significantly. Additionally, the police were able to enforce gang injunction orders which were civil orders placed on young people through the Crown Court which restricted particular behaviours of that person, such as restricting them to only one mobile phone, forbidding their interactions with certain named individuals or prohibiting their ability to access certain locations, which helped to reduce and prevent gang violence.

In terms of how the partners collaborated and communicated with each other to resolve safeguarding issues, Palvinder Kudhail highlighted that information was shared at a very early stage. When a referral was received by the Brent Family Front Door (BFFD), depending on the seriousness of the referral, all partner agencies would be asked to share the information they already had about that person and their family. The BFFD was a multi-agency team with police and health colleagues present physically in the civic centre, making that information flow easily. That collaboration then continued as part of the assessment and plan for that person, which would be individualised depending on the needs of the young person and the family.

Noting that there were separate but similar arrangements for safeguarding children and safeguarding adults, and the aim across the next year for the two groups to work more closely together, the Committee asked how the partnerships collaborated and communicated to resolve safeguarding issues so that work was not done in isolation between the two groups. Nicola Brownjohn (Independent Chair, Safeguarding Adults Board) explained that this workstream was building on the work done previously around transitional safeguarding, recognising that if, for example, a child was running county lines then there may well be an adult who was being cuckooed as well. The two partnerships wanted to look at exploitation together as it was clear that this did not stop once the young person reached the age of 18. A Joint Executive Group was also being established, made up of senior leaders for both adults and children's safeguarding and both Chairs to meet on a semi-regular basis and discuss joint or overlapping issues.

The Chair thanked those present for their contributions and drew the item to a close. He invited members to make recommendations with the following RESOLVED:

- i) To recommend that the Community and Wellbeing Scrutiny Committee formally endorse the inclusion of education as a fourth partner within children's safeguarding arrangements.
- ii) To recommend that the Committee continued to monitor the police improvement plans being implemented across the Metropolitan Police and within the NW BCU in view of the comments in the paper.

- iii) To formally invite Keith Makin to accompany the Chair of the Community and Wellbeing Scrutiny Committee to the next Brent Youth Parliament event.
- iv) In relation to the commitment to develop data collection outlined in the report, to recommend that the next report details what the current system for data collection and analysis is and what the improvement over the period was.

8. **Recommendations Tracker**

The Committee noted the recommendations tracker.

9. **Any other urgent business**

None.

The meeting closed at 7:45 pm
COUNCILLOR KETAN SHETH, Chair