

# Dudley Safeguarding Children Board

'Working Together to Keep Children & Young People Safe'

## ANNUAL REPORT

2008-09

&

## BUSINESS PLAN

2009-12

### Executive Summary

Every Child Matters

Staying Safe Matters to Every Child



## Foreword

This has been a difficult year for professionals working in the field of child protection and safeguarding, particularly since the publication of the Executive Summary into the death of Baby P, now known to us as Baby Peter. The case, and serious cases reviews since, have led to intense public and political scrutiny of child protection and a further review of such arrangements in England by Lord Laming. Nationally, and indeed locally, there has been a significant increase in referrals to social care resulting in an increase in the number of children subject to a child protection plan and to care proceedings. In Dudley, we have experienced a 60% increase in the number of referrals to our Assessment Services compared to the same period in the previous year, and likewise a continuing rise in the number of children subject to a child protection plan and children in care, which has risen to in excess of 570 children, the highest ever level in the history of the local authority. These pressures impact all agencies working directly in this field.

Alongside this increasing focus on child protection, we have also continued to address the wider safeguarding agenda driven by government policy. This in itself is challenging, as the Board works to co-ordinate working together arrangements from domestic abuse to sexual exploitation, from 'young runaways' to anti-bullying, from e-safety to learning from child deaths. As a Board, we remain highly committed to promoting safeguarding as everyone's business and to securing additional resources to ensure that all children are safeguarded. We will continue to promote the development of safer working practices and services through effective recruitment and employment practices.

Our focus, must and will inevitably however, need to re-emphasise the importance of ensuring that children, especially vulnerable children, are protected through effective arrangements at the 'front-line'.

I hope this report provides you with a sense of not just the challenges that lay ahead, but some of our achievements, much of which should be accredited to the commitment and professionalism of colleagues working across all organisations in our borough. Many children and young people have been safeguarded as direct result of this dedication. In the midst of the current climate, it is essential that we recognise these successes and outcomes.

*Graham Tilby*

Graham Tilby,  
Divisional Manager for Safeguarding & Review

**The Lord Laming**

March 2009

Dudley Safeguarding Children Board is committed to engaging and empowering staff working with children and young people to recognise, respond and act to safeguard children's & young people's well-being

## Introduction

“All agencies (should) work together to prevent children suffering harm and to promote their welfare, provide them with the services they require to address their identified needs and safeguard children who are being or who are likely to be harmed.”  
*Working Together, 2006*

Welcome to Dudley Safeguarding Children Board’s Annual Report 2008-09 & Business Plan 2009-10. The Board is the key statutory mechanism for agreeing how relevant organisations will co-operate and work together to safeguard and promote the welfare of children and young people in Dudley, and for ensuring the effectiveness of what they do. The full terms of reference for the Board can be accessed on our website at:

<http://safeguardingchildren.dudley.gov.uk/information-for-professionals/safeguarding-children-procedures/reference-section/dscb-terms-of-reference>

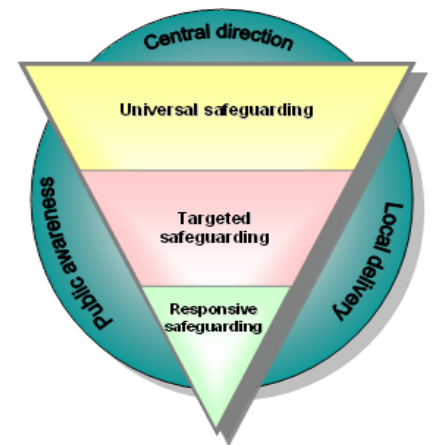
Dudley Safeguarding Children Board is committed to contributing towards improved outcomes for all children and young people – we believe that being safe matters to every child and we must take responsibility as adults to ensure that children and young people are safeguarded in order that they can be healthy, enjoy and achieve, make a positive contribution and achieve economic well-being.

This document provides an overview of the work of the Board over the last 12 months, and outlines its key inter-agency and single-agency priorities for 2009-10, including the work programme for each of its main sub-committees and task groups.

### Staying Safe

The government has set out its long-term vision for children & young people in the Children’s Plan, supported by a cross-government Stay Safe Action Plan underpinned by a Framework of 3 levels of protection.

- *All* children and young people should have safe environments to help promote their welfare and well-being
- Action needs to be targeted at *vulnerable groups* such as disabled, children in care etc.
- *Responses* to children who have been harmed to minimise lifelong impact



### Strategic Objectives

Dudley Safeguarding Children Board is committed to:

- promoting an understanding that safeguarding children & young people is everyone’s and every organisation’s responsibility;
- improving children & young people’s understanding of risks to their own safety and how they can safeguard themselves;
- raising public awareness of potential risks to children’s safety and what to do if they are worried about a child being abused; *and*
- developing safer services and employment practices across organisations who work or come into contact with children or young people.

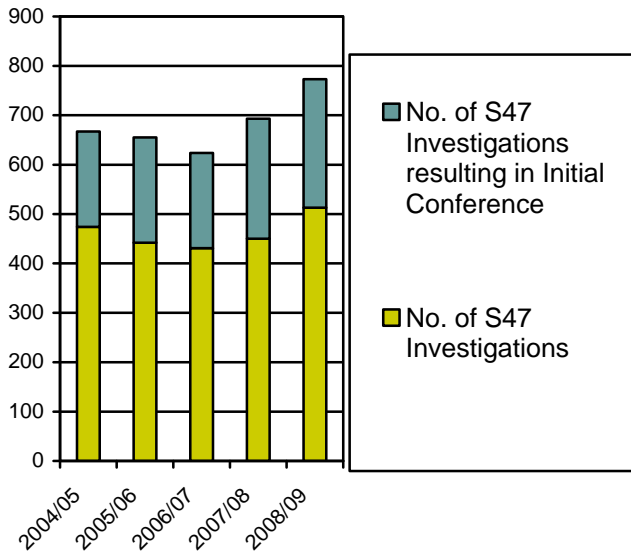
## Key Achievements 2007-09

### Some of our achievements during 2007-09 include:

- Comprehensive e-manual of safeguarding children procedures written and launched in January 2008, based on *Working Together (2006)* and supplementary guidance;
- Over 9,000 people who work with children & young people have attended child protection training during the last two years (measured by attendance at courses) – there was a 57% increase in people attending child protection during 2008-09 compared to the previous year (*see page for further details*);
- Received national recognition in respect of e-safety including work undertaken by Dudley Grid for Learning (DGfL) and the ESCape Project in collaboration with The Saltmine Trust;
- Responded to new statutory requirements such as the establishment of child death overview arrangements and the management of allegations against people who work with children;
- Child protection agencies were involved in over 500 joint Section 47 investigations to safeguard children's welfare during 2008-09 - over 200 children were made subject to an inter-agency child protection plan as a result of such enquiries
- Over 4,600 children took part in an anti-bullying survey as part of Dudley's 'Safe to Play' strategy, which has received national recognition by the Department for Children, Schools & Families;
- One of the first Local Safeguarding Children Board's in England to appoint Lay Advisors in 2007;
- Established new Child Death Review and Overview Panel from April 2008 (jointly with Sandwell LSCB), and reviewed 21 child deaths during 2008-09 including one Serious Case Review;
- Contributed to several regional developments such as in respect of child trafficking, cross-border guidance for managing allegations against staff, and a best value review of joint investigations;
- Established a Young People's Sexual Exploitation (YPSE) Panel, which discussed around 25 children during 2008-09 and commissioned Walsall Street Teams to deliver service to young people at risk of sexual exploitation;
- Developed a number of new specialist (Level 3) courses during the last two years, including e-safety, child sexual exploitation, rapid response to child deaths and safer recruitment training
- Improved safeguarding support to early years settings such as through advice, guidance and training



# Key Trends

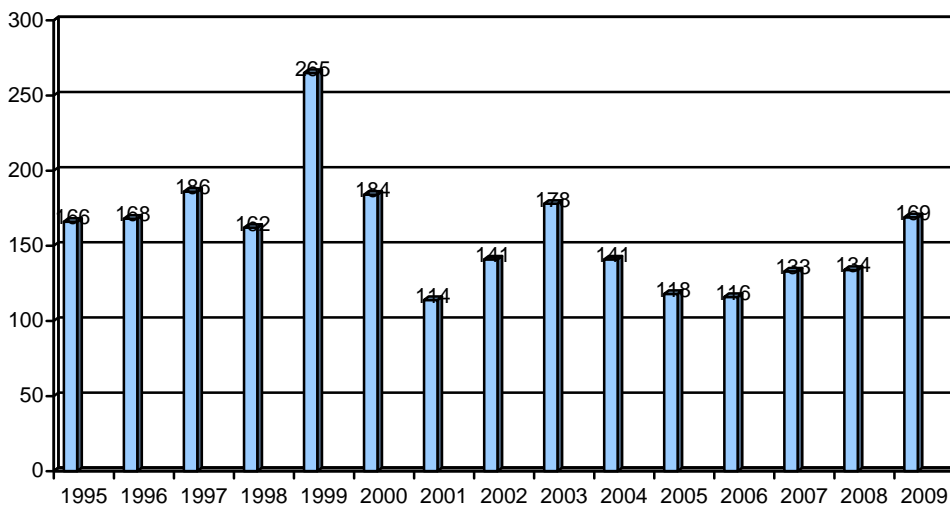
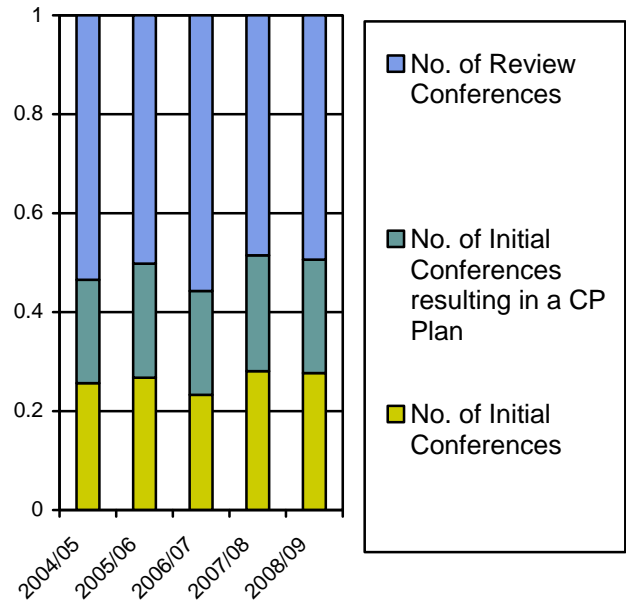


During 2008-09, 513 children & young people were subject to a Section 47 (Children Act 1989) child protection investigation. This represented a 14% increase from the previous year.

Of these, just over 50% resulted in an Initial Child Protection Conference and a decision being made about whether a child was at risk of continuing 'significant harm'.

There has been a steady rise in the number of Initial Child Protection Conferences during the last 3 years, with an average of 225 Initial Conferences per year during the period. The average conversion rate (number of Conferences resulting in a CP Plan) is 84.8% although the rate has declined having peaked during 2006-07 at 90.1%.

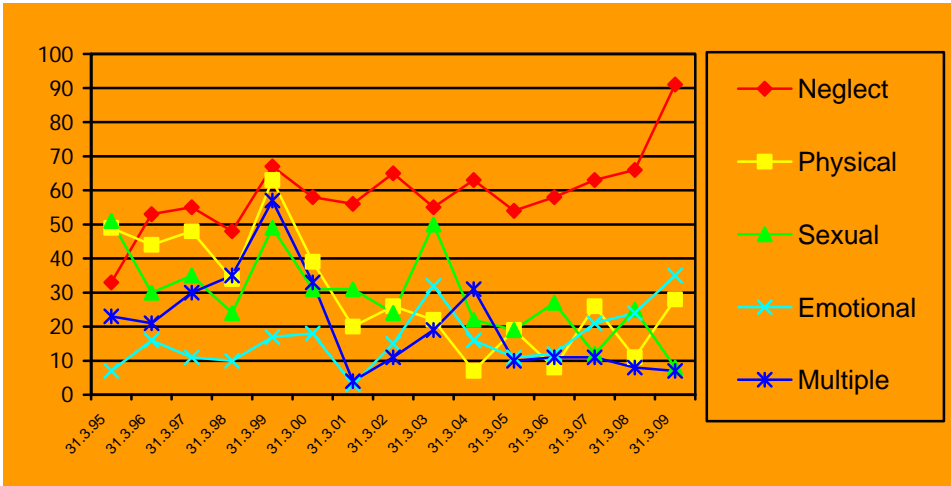
The number of children made subject to a child protection plan during 2008-09 was 207.



At 31<sup>st</sup> March 2009, 169 children were subject to a Child Protection Plan in Dudley. This represents a 26% increase compared to the previous end of year.



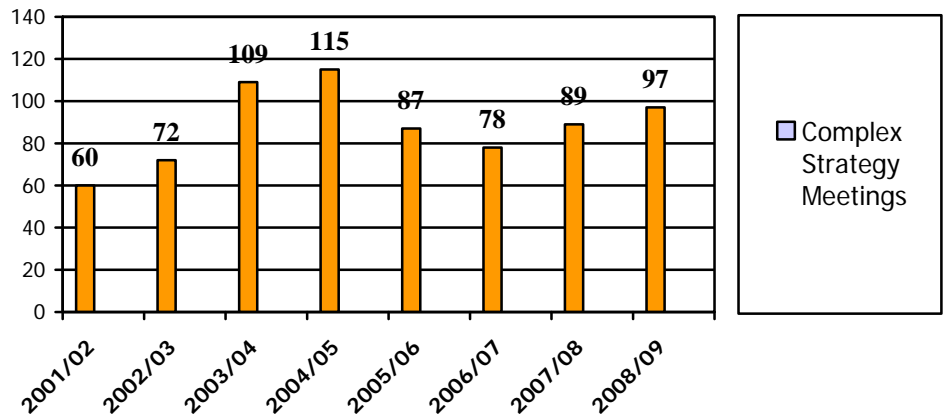
Figure 2: Children subject to a Child Protection Plan per Category of Abuse 1995-2009 as at 31 March



There has been a rising trend in neglect cases - the average proportion of children subject to a child protection plan due to neglect is 66.4% which is significantly compared to the national average (48%) There has also been a rising trend in respect of emotional abuse, some of which reflects an increased awareness of domestic abuse- other categories continue to fluctuate year on year.

The Safeguarding & Review Unit is responsible for chairing Complex Strategy Meetings – the majority of these are requested where there is a concern or allegation in respect of an adult working with children & young people and a need to co-ordinate possible criminal, child protection and disciplinary processes. The number of independently chaired Strategy meetings has risen steadily over the past three years – this is likely to continue with new guidance in respect of the management of allegations against people who work with children & young people.

Figure 3: Number of CP Meetings Independently Chaired 2001-2007



## Key Priorities 2009/12

### Improve inter-agency child protection arrangements

Performance Measures: National Indicator 66 and 70

Leads: DSCB Steering Group

Specifically we will aim to:

- Support the implementation of findings from Laming Review, Government response to Laming and self-assessment activity
- Improve consistency & quality of Child Protection Plans

## Improve inter–agency responses to emotional abuse & neglect

*Leads: Social Care & Primary Care Trust*

*Specifically we will aim to:*

- Research and introduce a risk assessment model & tools in respect of neglect
- Develop combined chronologies between social care and primary care
- Support development of parenting programmes to address early intervention

## Improve inter–agency arrangements in respect of children who go missing from care or home

**Performance Measure: National Indicator 71**

*Leads: Social Care & Police*

*Specifically we will aim to:*

- Support gathering and analysis of data
- Review practice & procedures for responding to children who go missing
- Develop service in collaboration with voluntary sector organisation for young runaways

## Improve inter–agency responses and reviews to child deaths

**Performance Measure: Public Service Agreement 13**

*Leads: Primary Care Trust, Police & Social Care*

*Specifically we will aim to:*

- Improve rapid response arrangements, notably in respect of health
- Develop more robust review arrangements

## Improve inter–agency arrangements in respect of domestic abuse

*Leads: Community Safety, Social Care, Police and Primary Care Trust*

*Specifically we will aim to:*

- Contribute to improving risk assessment processes in respect of children & young people who experience domestic abuse
- Contribute to strategic service improvement activity aimed at improving inter–agency arrangements

## Enhance quality assurance capacity in respect of child protection and looked after children

*Leads: DSCB Steering Group*

*Specifically we will aim to:*

- Review inter–agency quality audit arrangements and develop proposals for enhancing capacity

## Improve inter-agency arrangements in respect of sexual exploitation and abuse

*Leads: Social Care & Primary Care Trust*

*Specifically we will aim to:*

- Review YPSE arrangements in respect of young people at risk of sexual exploitation
- Review e-safety strategy in respect of safeguarding & new technologies

## Improve anti-bullying responses, notably in respect of vulnerable groups of children

*Leads: Education & Community Safety*

*Specifically we will aim to:*

- Implement delivery plan arising from 'safe to play' consultation and 'Switch On'

## Improve safer recruitment & employment practices

*Leads: Children's Services & Primary Care Trust*

*Specifically we will aim to:*

- Ensure readiness of implementation of Vetting & Barring Scheme
- Implement new practice guidance in respect of handling allegations against staff

## Improve governance & accountability arrangements

*Leads: DSCB Steering Group*

*Specifically we will aim to:*

- Clarifying protocol arrangements with Children's Trust, notably in respect of scrutiny and commissioning
- Support development of accountability and competency/skills frameworks across all agencies





## Key Contacts



If you would like to know more about the work of Dudley Safeguarding Children Board or spend some time with us, please don't hesitate to contact one of the Safeguarding & Review Team on 01384 813061 or email me on [graham.tilby@dudley.gov.uk](mailto:graham.tilby@dudley.gov.uk) or [jackie.jennings@dudley.gov.uk](mailto:jackie.jennings@dudley.gov.uk)

If you require specific advice or guidance in respect of safeguarding issue affecting your agency, please contact:

Early Years	<a href="mailto:kim.sharratt@dudley.gov.uk">kim.sharratt@dudley.gov.uk</a>
Primary Care	<a href="mailto:pauline.owens@dudley.nhs.uk">pauline.owens@dudley.nhs.uk</a> or <a href="mailto:alison.wills@dudley.nhs.uk">alison.wills@dudley.nhs.uk</a>
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Dudley Group of Hospitals	<a href="mailto:carol.weston@dgoh.nhs.uk">carol.weston@dgoh.nhs.uk</a>

**Dudley Safeguarding Children Board**  
 CHAIR: Pauline Sharratt, CO-ORDINATOR: Graham Tilby  
 DEVELOPMENT MANAGER: Jackie Jennings

**DSCB Steering Group**

CHAIR: Pauline Sharratt  
 CO-ORDINATOR: Graham Tilby

