

Select Committee on Children's Services – 18 June 2009

Report of Director of Children's Services

**Protection of Children in England –
Lord Laming's Report and Government Action Plan**

Purpose of Report

1. To advise Select Committee Board on Children's Services of the outcomes and recommendations of Lord Laming's Review – Protection of Children in England, the Government's response and local actions

Background

2. In November 2008 the Secretary of State for Children, Schools and Families commissioned Lord Laming to undertake an independent progress report on Child Protection in England following the tragic death of baby Peter in Haringey
3. Lord Laming published his report on 12 March 2009. He set out progress made since the Victoria Climbié inquiry (which he led in 2003) and made a total of 58 recommendations to improve the protection of children in England. There are 44 recommendations directed to Government and Government Departments and 14 recommendations to local bodies.
4. Lord Laming's recommendations are ordered under the following 8 headings:
 - Progress
 - Leadership and Accountability
 - Support for Children
 - Inter-agency working
 - Children's Workforce
 - Improvement and Challenge
 - Organisation and Finance
 - Legal

5. The recommendations include:

- Appointment of a new Chief Adviser on the Safety of Children, Sir Roger Singleton
- New cross-Government National Safeguarding Delivery Unit to drive continuous improvement
- Revision of Working Together to Safeguard Children
- Strengthen the challenge role of Local Safeguarding Children Boards (LSCBs)
- Professional development and leadership training
- Immediate measures to improve support for frontline social workers to address recruitment and retention and to begin to raise morale of the profession
- New statutory targets for safeguarding
- Local Authorities to ensure that Children in Need have early access to effective specialist services
- Children's Trust to ensure that partners apply information Sharing Guidance to protect children

6. The Government accepted all of the recommendations and issued an Action Plan on 7 May 2009 announcing a wide ranging package of measures and setting out how it will deliver the step change in child protection, called for by Lord Laming.

7. The Government's Action Plan commits to greater openness and public scrutiny of local child protection arrangements as well as more investment in training and support of frontline social workers.

8. This reform will be driven forward by a new cross-Government delivery unit working alongside Sir Roger Singleton, the first ever Chief Adviser on the Safety of Children.

9. The package also outlines a £58 million six-point plan to transform the social work profession.

Specific Actions to Note are as follows

Social Worker Training and Retention and the Role of ICT:

- A national marketing and recruitment campaign later this year
- A Return to Social Work Scheme to support former social workers back into the profession
- A graduate Recruitment Scheme to sponsor high quality graduates to undertake social worker training
- New roles to retain the expertise of experienced social workers on the front line
- Recruitment and retention pilots in two regions with high vacancy and turnover rates

Inspection and Statutory Targets:

- The current inspection framework will be strengthened with a grading on a scale from 1 (outstanding) to 4 (inadequate) for a school's safeguarding arrangements
- A 3 year Ofsted-led rolling programme of safeguarding inspections will commence in June 2009

Political and Professional Accountability, Leadership and Governance

The Action Plan states that:

- All Directors of Children's Services (DCS) who do not have direct experience or background in safeguarding and child protection must appoint a senior manager within their team with the necessary skills and experience
 - There will be a presumption that the Local Safeguarding Children Board (LSCB) is chaired by someone independent of the local agencies so that the LSCB can exercise its local challenge function effectively
 - Both the DCS and the Lead Member should always be members of both the Children's Trust Board and the Local Safeguarding Children Board
 - Local Authority Chief Executives are responsible for satisfying themselves that the DSCBs are fulfilling their managerial responsibilities for safeguarding and promoting the welfare of children and young people
 - Every year, as part of the Children's Trust annual report, the Chief Executive and the Leader of the Council should make an assessment of the effectiveness of local governance and partnership arrangements for improving outcomes for children and supporting the best possible standards for safeguarding children
 - LSCBs arrangements should be opened up to wider public scrutiny through the appointment of two lay members drawn from the local community to the LSCB. The DCSB has brought forward an amendment to the Apprenticeships, Skills, Children and Learning Bill to require this
10. The Government has also published the first report of the Social Work Task Force setting out their advice on implementing Lord Laming's recommendations, including about the future of the Integrated Children's System (ICS).
11. Attached as **Appendix 1** is Dudley's position against key actions identified in this report and **Appendix 2** Assessments of Safeguarding Arrangements in Dudley - actions taken to date.

Finance

12. Lord Laming recommended that:
- DSCF, DoH, Home Office and HM Treasury ensure Children's Services, Police and Health services have protected budgets for staffing and training for child protection services
 - DCSF to sufficiently resource Children's Services to ensure that early intervention and preventative services have capacity to respond
13. The Government's Action Plan will require Children's Trusts to prepare an annual assessment of need on which the financial contributions made by local partners to jointly fund safeguarding initiatives will be based.

14. The Action Plan further states it is the responsibility of all partners on a Children's Trust to assess the adequacy of their funding on children's services.
15. DCS is undertaking a review of funding allocated to safeguarding to consider how this can be utilised to meet the new requirements and to identify any budget pressures.

Equality Impact

16. Children in need of safeguarding are amongst the most vulnerable in our community. It is explicit in the recommendations that all communities are equally served and that services are culturally sensitive.

Safety Implications

17. The DSCB, and the Council as a partner on the Board, will be taking action in response to the recommendations to enhance children's safeguards.

Community Implications

18. Response to the recommendations of Lord Laming's report and the Government's Action Plan will enhance the health and welfare of children and contribute to community safety.
19. Key actions include the involvement of lay advisors on Safeguarding Boards to ensure better engagement of the community in keeping children safe.

Recommendations

20. That Select Committee comments and notes the assessments of safeguarding arrangements in Dudley and actions taken to date.



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Protection of Children in England

Lord Laming's Recommendations and Government's actions	Dudley Position
Social Worker training and retention and the role of ICT	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • National marketing and recruitment campaign to launch later this year • Return to Social Work Scheme to support former social workers back into the profession • Graduate Recruitment Scheme to sponsor high quality graduates to undertake social worker training • New roles to retain the expertise of experienced social workers on the front line • Recruitment and retention pilots in two regions with high vacancy and turnover rates 	<p>DCS has a rolling advertising programme for social work staff and participates in the annual job fair with DACHS</p> <p>Review local market strategy to make it more specific to former social workers</p> <p>We already have graduate training scheme and are sponsoring students onto Social Work Training</p> <p>We have a Senior Practitioner and Assistant Team Manager grade both of which enable experienced social workers to remain in frontline work</p> <p>Dudley is part of a regional project with DCSF and Government Office and are specifically engaged in working to establish support and administrative roles to release social work time</p>

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Review of ICT 	<p>We are implementing ICS as per Government's requirements and are in discussion with ICT provider to improve systems</p>
<p>Inspection and Statutory Targets</p>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The current inspection framework will be strengthened with a grading on a scale from 1 (outstanding) to 4 (inadequate) for a school's safeguarding arrangements 	<p>Headteachers and Governors have been advised of the requirements for new inspection framework. All Headteachers to undertake Level 2 child protection training</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> A 3 year Ofsted-led rolling programme of safeguarding inspection will commence in June 2009 	<p>In addition to the 3 year safeguarding inspections we will also have an annual inspection of frontline duty teams. We have not been notified of the date for this but preparation is underway against Ofsted standards</p>
<p>Political and Professional Accountability, Leadership and Governance</p>	
<p>The Action Plan states that:</p>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> All Directors and Children's Services (DCS) who do not have direct experience or background in safeguarding and child protection must appoint a senior manager within their team with the necessary skills and experience 	<p>Directorate has a manager at Assistant Director level with direct experience in safeguarding and child protection</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> There will be a presumption that The Local Safeguarding Children Board (LSCB) is chaired by someone independent of the local agencies so that the LSCB can exercise its local challenge function effectively 	<p>Dudley LSCB chaired by the Assistant Director of Children's Specialist Services. The Board has a job description and person specification for an independent chair and will be moving to this position during the next 12 months</p>

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Both the DCS and the Lead Member should always be members of both the Children's Trust Board and the Local Safeguarding Children Board. 	<p>DCS is currently a member of Children's Trust and LSCB. Cabinet Member is a member of the Children's Trust and under the revised Working Together will become a member of LSCB</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Local Authority Chief Executives are responsible for satisfying themselves that the DCSs are fulfilling their managerial responsibilities for safeguarding and promoting the welfare of children and young people. 	<p>The Chair of Dudley LSCB, DCS and Cabinet Member meet regularly with Chief Executive to report on safeguarding activity within the borough</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Every year, as part of the Children's Trust annual report, the Chief Executive and the Leader of the Council should make an assessment of the effectiveness of local governance and partnership arrangements for improving outcomes for children and supporting the best possible standards for safeguarding children 	<p>DCS has undertaken health check of safeguarding arrangements within the borough and the DCSB has required all agencies to audit their safeguarding arrangements. A Safeguarding Improvement Plan is in progress</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> LSCB arrangements should be opened up to wider public scrutiny through the appointment of two lay members drawn from the local community to the LSCB 	<p>Dudley Safeguarding Children Board has had lay membership for some considerable time. We were one of the first Boards in the country to do this. We have two members drawn from the community who sit on the executive Board</p>

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Assessments of Safeguarding Arrangements in Dudley

Actions taken to date

- DSCB has written to all partner agencies requiring them to undertake an audit of their organisation's safeguarding practice against the outcomes of the Haringey Joint Area Review, the Chief Inspector's Report on Safeguarding and on the Victoria Climbié recommendations
- Agencies have been required to confirm in writing that they have:
 - (1) Undertaken the audit
 - (2) Where they have identified gaps and deficiencies they have taken actions to address them
 - (3) To advise on any actions which will need the support of partner agencies or the DSCB
- DSCB have established an Executive Group, including key partners from Social Care, Health and Police, to focus on child protection activity including coordination of the current audit work identifying key priorities and managing performance through a multi agency child protection data collection
- The DCS and chair of DSCB have written to all elected Members and to local MP's advising them of the areas of strengths in our local safeguarding arrangements and advising them of actions to be taken to further assess our safeguarding arrangements. Action is being taken to ensure that all Members have a current Criminal Records Bureau (CRB) check and all Members were invited and participated in a briefing session on safeguarding on 12 February. In addition they have been invited to access Child Protection Basic Awareness Training if they feel this will further assist their understanding of the issues
- Quarterly meetings are diaried between the Chief Executive, Cabinet Member for Children's Services, DCS and Assistant Director for Children's Specialist Services to report on safeguarding arrangements within the authority and the activity of the DSCB
- Meetings are in place between the Cabinet Member for Children's Services, DCS and the chair of the DSCB to report on activity and outcomes following every DSCB meeting
- A summary of Roles and Responsibilities within the Council has been updated and presented to Corporate Board for approval

- Briefings have been undertaken to the Children's Trust, HTCF (Headteachers Consultative Forum), Heads and Chairs, Chairs of Governor's meetings and Select Committee on Children's Services
- Four inter agency briefings were delivered in April to advise staff and managers of the outcomes of the national and local assessments and implications for their services. 500 staff from agencies within the borough attended
- Training on assessment and analysis for social workers has been commissioned
- Training on assessment learning from Serious Case Reviews has been delivered
- A 'Safeguarding Schools' document has been produced to support schools in assessing their safeguarding arrangements
- All child protection plans have been reviewed to ensure that every child requiring a plan has one and those plans are up to date. A sample audit of child protection plans is being undertaken to assess their quality and identify any key issues
- An audit of 10 child protection enquiries which did not proceed to conference has been undertaken
- A audit of 10 cases referred for investigation and support where No Further Action was taken has been undertaken
- An audit of 10 cases where intensive family support is being provided on a repeat referral basis where there is no child protection plan in place has been undertaken
- A number of focus groups both inter agency and for social work staff have been held to gather views from frontline workers around inter agency communication and information sharing
- Undertaken a self assessment against Victoria Climbié recommendations
- An external consultant has been engaged to support the work of the Directorate and has completed her audit work and observations of frontline practice and will feedback to the Director and Cabinet Member by the end of May with a written report to be presented to Corporate Board in June
- The Cabinet Member for Children's Services and DCS are undertaking visits to frontline services