



DERBY CITY COUNCIL

COUNCIL CABINET
26 APRIL 2005

Report of the Director of Social Services

The Victoria Climbié Inquiry – Performance Report

RECOMMENDATION

1. To note the progress made following the previous report on the Victoria Climbié Inquiry, presented to Council Cabinet on 28 September 2004.

REASON FOR RECOMMENDATION

- 2.1 The Social Services Department produced an Action Plan to respond to the outcome of the Social Services Inspectorate Self Audit, following the publication of the Victoria Climbié Inquiry. The functions of the Social Services Inspectorate have now been transferred to the Commission for Social Care Inspection. The aim of the Action Plan is to further improve the quality of services to children in need in Derby.
- 2.2 The Action Plan has been regularly updated and this report highlights progress made. Six monthly reports are routinely being made to Cabinet on performance in this area. The Derby Area Child Protection Committee also considers regular updates.

SUPPORTING INFORMATION

- 3.1 The report of the inquiry into the death of Victoria Climbié was jointly published by the Department of Health and the Home Office on the 28 January 2003. The Inquiry had been chaired by Lord Laming, formerly Chief Inspector of Social Services.
- 3.2 Victoria Climbié had died on the 25 February 2000 at the age of eight, she had 128 separate injuries. She had arrived in England less than a year earlier and during her time in England had come into contact with three housing departments, four social services departments, two police child protection teams, a specialist unit run by the NSPCC and was admitted to two hospitals.
- 3.3 Lord Laming concluded that the “principal failure to protect Victoria was the result of widespread organisational malaise”. The report contained 108 recommendations, many of which were for immediate implementation to address organisational failure. The conclusion was that organisations had got the basics wrong.

- 3.4 The self audit undertaken in the early part of 2003 identified that Derby Social Services and the range of agencies involved in services to vulnerable children in Derby have not got the basics wrong. The Social Services Inspectorate (SSI) at that time concluded that Derby provides a safe service with effective management and governance.
- 3.5 The Social Services department was subject to a Children's Services Inspection in October 2004 by the Commission for Social Care Inspection. Every Council with Children's Services responsibilities must receive a children's inspection every five years. The Inspection report was very positive in it's outcome. It stated that 'The Council has a very strong record of compliance with the recommendations from the Inquiry into the death of Victoria Climbié'. There were no specific recommendations in relation to the Climbié Inquiry arising from the inspection of Children's Services.
- 3.6 The Climbié audit tool established seven standards for services to children in need:
- referral
 - assessment
 - allocation, service provision and closure
 - guidance
 - training and development
 - organisation and management
 - governance.

The Standards continue to be addressed through our Climbié Action Plan, which is routinely monitored and progressed by Children's Services senior managers. A regular programme of file audits by Heads of Service and Senior Managers is undertaken to review practice in key areas of practice highlighted for ongoing monitoring. Current performance in each of these standards is presented below.

3.7 **Standard One – Referral**

This standard requires that *referral and initial response, including those provided outside office hours, safeguard and promote the welfare of children and are convenient and user friendly.*

The Social Services Department has procedures in place for managing initial referrals regarding children at risk of significant harm and these procedures are monitored, reviewed and subject to workload and performance management systems. Quantative data is collected on a monthly basis and included in management reports. The key indicators for assessment timescales are measured.

The reception teams continue to be affected by staff shortages, some improvements have been made and the service has benefited from the appointments of a Service Manager and a new Head of Service. The service is staffed by ten social workers and two community care workers. The vacancy rate is currently 3 workers and 2 Community Care Workers have been appointed on a temporary basis against the vacancies. There have been a number of other

staffing changes since the last report.

Derby has a common referral form that continues to be used by all agencies and ensures all child protection referrals are made and followed up in line with standards. In addition agencies who have received the appropriate training are now required to undertake a Common Assessment on all cases involving children in need prior to providing services or referral to Social Services or another agency. This will ensure that children and families receive appropriate targeted services more speedily and consistently. The common assessment is an important new development. This assessment enables professionals providing universal services to work with parents about concerns at an early stage.

Implementing Common Assessment is an integral part of the Children Act 2004 and the change for children agenda. The revision of the form used to record strategy meeting discussions and decisions has now been completed by the Police, and signed off by ACPC. Ongoing monitoring includes monitoring reception work on child protection by the Head of Service, ensuring the reporting of crime detected in the course of child protection work and reporting and discussing workload and allocation issues routinely with senior managers.

Standard Two – Assessment

This safeguarding standard requires that *assessment of children in need, focus on safeguarding and promoting the welfare of the child by addressing their development needs and the capacity of the primary carers to meet those needs.*

The policy, procedure and practice guidance around children in need work is in place. The departments case allocation processes remain clear around the purpose of the intervention and the role of the worker. Good supervision systems are in place. The information on the conclusion and decisions of assessments is routinely recorded. Forms to fully record all aspects of visits to children have been designed and are routinely used.

Work is still needed with Housing Services on how they might use common assessment to identify concerns, but referrals continue to be made appropriately to the Children In Need Service.

Where interpreting services are required in order to communicate with children these are provided. There is some shortfall in these services due to the wide range of languages and dialects used in Derby. However, work is continuing on a multi-agency basis to establish an Integrated Interpreting Service.

Due to the complexity of assessments and staff vacancies it is difficult to meet the required timescales. Our performance has improved slightly on completion of Core Assessments to time to 47%. Performance improvements are being sought both in the area of data entry and in the time taken to complete assessments. In order to further improve skills in assessing children, staff are being encouraged to attend training on direct work with children but due to staff vacancies this has been difficult to achieve in some service areas.

It remains the case that there is no clear agreement for accessing legal advice on a 24 hour basis but staff needing legal advice out of hours always discuss cases with a Head of Service or Assistant Director who can then contact a solicitor. Legal advice outside of normal office hours has only been needed once in a period exceeding three and a half years.

Through partnership work under the Information Sharing and Assessment Project, the Education Service has reviewed, revised and implemented an improved response to following up Derby children missing from school for any reason.

The routine monthly audit by senior managers ensures that children are seen and spoken to in the course of assessments.

Standard Three – Allocation, service provision and closure

This standard requires that where a child is identified as being in need councils provide a service appropriate to their level of assessed need. Closure is only considered following a full analysis of need and such action is deemed to be in the child's best interest.

There were 1716 open children in need cases at 31 March 2005. As at 31st March 2005, all children on the Child Protection Register or subject to S47 Child Protection investigations were allocated to qualified social care workers. Arrangements are in place to ensure management knowledge of and oversight of unallocated cases. There are currently a small number of unallocated children in need cases in the Children's Disability Team. There has been an improvement in the use of chronologies but it remains the case that not all children have up to date chronologies on their files. This issue is monitored via the regular audits. The system of file audit by Senior Managers ensures that key issues arising from these audits are addressed with managers and workers on an individual basis.

There has been an improvement in the performance of child protection reviews completed within timescales. The current performance is 96.7%, against an end of year 2003/04 figure of 84%. This is a Key Threshold Indicator and much work has been undertaken both within Social Services and with other agencies whose co-operation is crucial, to improve the performance.

All child protection cases continue to be allocated to qualified social workers who have also received in house training on safeguarding children. There have been continued staffing difficulties in the Assessment and Care Planning arm of the service which deals with core assessments, children on the Child Protection Register and Children Looked After. The staffing position has eased somewhat however, the service continues to be short of staff and the staff who remain in the service are under pressure. The vacancy rate in this part of the service, which is an improvement since we last reported, is now 33%.

Managers are now routinely ensuring that children have been spoken with and that this is recorded on the file. The protocol for cases transferring between teams within the authority is in place and ensures good handover of information.

Similarly when cases where children's names are on the Child Protection Register transfer there is a good system for ensuring these cases are properly managed.

There is still a gap in agreeing a protocol for children moving between authorities, when they are assessed as being children in need, on a regional basis. In all cases Derby retains full responsibility for children who move until suitable alternative arrangements are made. Additionally, Derby Social Services has clear arrangements and will take action to safeguard children who have recently moved to reside within Derby where the previous authority has not effectively transferred the case but is not responding to a child protection concern. We also have a new protocol and clear arrangements in place for notifying and supporting children looked after placements away from Derby and incoming placements from other LASSDS

Standard Four – Guidance

This standard requires that *social services has effective policies and procedures in respect of children in need consistent with local ACPC arrangements and monitors the implementation of them.*

The Area Child Protection Committee (ACPC) has clear procedures and all agencies are accountable to the procedures. Compliance for Social Services staff is measured by managers via supervisory arrangements and by audit. The Child Protection managers also adopt a quality assurance role in relation to the child protection procedures, highlighting any issues around non-compliance that are then addressed immediately.

The Procedures and Standards Sub-Committee of ACPC has developed formal ACPC arrangements for children moving into Derby from abroad. It is acknowledged that both the ACPC procedures and children in need procedures will need to be revised when the new legislation, the Children Act 2004, is introduced. The transformation from ACPC to Local Safeguarding Children's Boards is an important step towards further improving safeguarding arrangements and the preparation for this is well under way in Derby. A Shadow Board will operate following some final preparation work in April 2005. See Standard Three for reference to the Regional Protocol which sets out the arrangements for notification and management of children placed in care away from education or home.

Standard Five – Training and Development

This standard requires that *social services ensure that all staff working with children in need are suitably skilled and qualified to undertake appropriate continuing professional development.*

Child protection cases continue to be allocated to suitably skilled, qualified and trained social workers. Children in need, who are not on the child protection register, receive support from community care workers and family support workers, who do not have a social work qualification. These workers are closely supervised and supported by their managers and development officers. They

may have a range of other qualifications that include NNEB and NVQ.

All staff receive regular planned supervision and an accompanying Achievement and Development Plan. Heads of Service commission training according to needs on a regular basis. It has been more difficult to release staff for training due to staffing shortages, but this is improving.

The ACPC has developed a multi-agency training plan and has developed a training programme for staff at various levels in all agencies in order to ensure good quality, consistent training. A pool of experienced practitioners from key agencies assists in the delivery of training. There is a 'training for trainers' programme to be delivered in June 05. The development and rollout of a course of training for all agencies on common initial assessment of children's needs also supports the development of a consistent approach. Funding issues continue to restrict the ability to provide multi-agency training and we were disappointed that the Government chose not to impose funding formulas on to Safeguarding Boards through the Children Act 2004. However, locally negotiations are taking place to ensure that adequate funding is made available, and work is ongoing to support this.

We reported previously that staff turnover had impacted significantly on parts of the service. A recruitment campaign has yielded some results that has improved the quality of services delivered to children and families as well as to provide some relief to social workers who have remained in the service. However, the department must continue to support existing staff well and attract new staff. Average caseloads remain high but have not increased in the last six months. The department is looking to provide a standard induction and an increased level of management support to new staff. The Children's Inspection confirmed the quality of assessment and care planning provided by the services is good and children are safely managed.

Standard Six – Organisation and Management

This standard requires that social services has performance management arrangements in place within which all staff understand their responsibilities for delivering the services supported by regular supervision and appraisal.

Decisions and necessary actions continue to be consistently recorded on files by managers. This activity is audited on a monthly basis by senior managers. In addition, cases are audited to examine specific activity, for example, children whose homes are re-registered onto the Child Protection Register. The ACPC has also established a system for multi-agency audit.

Casework discussions with senior managers are planned in order to ensure decision-making is consistent and focused on the child. All managers produce monthly reports to Assistant Directors with regard to activity and performance. A management information report is available each month to assist managers to manage key performance against national and local indicators. Following the introduction of a revised senior management structure in the Social Services department Heads of Service now present the key issues from Children's Services to the Departmental Management Team on a quarterly basis.

Standard Seven – Governance

This standard requires that *Councillors and Chief Executives have clear accountabilities for social services for children in need including arrangements for the review of policy and practice and strong scrutiny arrangements.*

Children's services priorities and improvements are explicitly stated in the Councils Statements of priority and operational plans for 2005/2006. Resources for children in need continue to be stretched. Derby's strategy is to improve our in-house fostering provision to avoid escalation of independent sector placements. The pressures from the Commission for Social Care Inspection in relation to national standards also impact on the budget. The Director, Assistant Directors and the Cabinet Member for Social Care & Youth maintain contact with the service via a programme of visits.

Work has been undertaken in relation to the workforce strategy but further work is needed to ensure that, in an ever-changing environment, social care work in Derby is attractive in order to ensure recruitment and retention of staff. This work continues to be managed jointly between operational staff, personnel and the workforce development and learning section. The recent introduction of our trainee social work scheme will ensure a continued supply of trained workers in the future.

At central Government level children's social care functions have now been transferred to the Department for Education and Skills. The Children's Act became law in the Autumn of 2004. This will bring about rapid change and ensure that services for children are provided in an integrated way.

The work for this transition has begun at various levels led by the executive group of the Children's Strategic Planning Partnership. A shadow Local Safeguarding Children's Board will be established by April 2005. It is vital that Derby retains its current focus on the safeguarding agenda whilst work is undertaken on the integration agenda. The executive group of the Children's Strategic Planning Partnership and ACPC are well aware of this need and systems will be in place to ensure that the safeguarding agenda is considered at every stage as the work on integration progresses.

A Quality Assurance strategy has been developed by drawing upon all the existing quality assurance resources and establishing a combined approach. This has been piloted with two children's services teams and is now ready for roll out. All children's services teams are working to a common set of standards as of January 2005.

Performance reports are regularly made to the Director of Social Services, the Corporate Parenting Overview and Scrutiny Sub-Commission.

Services to children in need continue to be a high priority for the Council and the department. Work is continuous in terms of improving standards of service and practice. The Climbié Action Plan has provided a focus to improve services and there remains a high commitment to improvement despite some of the difficulties

highlighted in this report. Social Services has a very committed staff team who work hard, often in difficult circumstances and their continued efforts are to be supported and commended.

For more information contact: Sarah Davis Tel: 01332 256705 sarah.davis@derby.gov.uk

Background papers: None

Appendices Appendix 1 Implications

IMPLICATIONS

Financial

1. None.

Legal

2. Services to children in need are provided under the Children Act 1989. The new Children's Act 2004 received royal assent in Autumn 2004. This has significant implications for the way in which social care, education and health services for vulnerable children are commissioned.
Corporately arrangements are in place to ensure the changes are properly managed.

Personnel

3. The current shortage of social work staff nationally does impact upon the department's ability to provide quality services to children in need in Derby and is constantly reviewed and managed carefully. Fewer people are entering the profession and a higher number are leaving. However, since the previous report, retention of staff has improved.

Equalities Impact

4. This report concerns the social care services provided to the most vulnerable children in Derby. The Social Services department is undertaking a specific review of services to children from black and minority ethnic communities. Existing policy guidance requires that the needs of disabled children and children from black and minority ethnic communities are specifically identified in assessments and addressed in care plans.

Corporate Objectives and Priorities for Change

5. This accords with the Council's objective of **healthy, safe and independent communities** and furthers the priority of **modernising social care, including adult home care and the fostering service**.