



DERBY CITY COUNCIL

COUNCIL CABINET
17 March 2008

ITEM 23

Report of the Chair of the Derby Safeguarding
Children Board

Safeguarding Children Review

SUMMARY

- 1.1 The case of 'Baby P' in Haringey Local Authority (LA) and reports on some other LAs have generated concerns nationally about procedures for safeguarding children and young people. Various procedures to address this were put in place by the Secretary of State for Children, Schools and Families.
- 1.2 The Corporate Director for Children and Young People has led to a review with the Derby Safeguarding Children Board of processes in Derby, in the light of the Ofsted Joint Area Review of Haringey and Department for Children, Schools and Families communications.
- 1.3 The report is being taken to the Children and Young People's Commission on 10 March 2009 and any comments will be reported to Council Cabinet.
- 1.4 Whilst evidence suggests that practice and processes overall in Derby are strong, and Localities structures provide a good basis for the future, there are areas which need to be strengthened. Continuous review is, in fact, an important feature of this high risk service area.
- 1.5 The DSCB is a partnership currently chaired by the Corporate Director for Children and Young People which oversees inter-agency work to safeguard children and young people. Derby City Council is accountable for the safeguarding work carried out by its own services and for the quality assurance of that work. The Council's children's social care service has the lead responsibility for investigating safeguarding concerns.

RECOMMENDATION

- 2.1 To note the outcomes of the review of safeguarding and to endorse the proposed actions.

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

- 3.1 As in all local authorities, the Council's integrated Children and Young People's Department was established under the Children Act 2004, with single managerial accountability to the Corporate Director for Children and Young People and political accountability to the Cabinet Member for Children and Young People. This in turn was a response to the case of Victoria Climbié, the review of whose death revealed very serious shortcomings in work to safeguard and promote children's welfare.
- 3.2 More recently, the review into the death of Baby P in Haringey revealed many of the same issues. As a follow up to this, all authorities were sent a number of documents, which, amongst other things, set out action that needed to be taken to review local safeguarding arrangements. These included:
- The report of the Joint Area Review of Safeguarding in Haringey which had been commissioned following the outcome of the Baby P court case
 - A letter from the Secretary of State for Children, Schools and Families asking all DCSs to satisfy themselves as to the effectiveness of local safeguarding arrangements against the findings of the Ofsted JAR of Haringey
 - An Ofsted report which is an analysis of their evaluations of Serious Case Reviews over 2007/08
 - The Government's response to the Joint Chief Inspector's report on safeguarding
 - Initial advice from Lord Laming (who had carried out the review into the Victoria Climbié case) to the Secretary of State and the Secretary of State's response.
- 3.3 As a result of this, the safeguarding processes and practice in Derby have been tested against the Haringey report and associated documents.
- 3.4 The Haringey situation and outcomes are very much focused on child protection, though safeguarding now covers a much wider range of risks to children and young people, for example accidental injury and death, anti-social behaviour, bullying and discrimination and stability of care.
- 3.5 The annual performance assessments of Derby's Children's Services and the more intensive Joint Area Review carried out in October/November 2007 have all graded safeguarding in Derby as 'good' (grade 3 on a 4 point scale).
- 3.6 The 2007 JAR noted in its main findings:
"The contribution of local services to improving outcomes for children and young people at risk, or requiring safeguarding, is good. There is effective interagency and preventative work to identify, and respond, to the needs of children at risk in an appropriate and timely way, although the proportion of initial assessments completed on time has fallen. There are clear separate protocols for defined groups to identify missing children. These have not yet been brought together into an over-arching strategy". (This has now been rectified.)

- 3.7 The 2008 APA noted:
“The Council has made good progress in responding to the recommendation of the 2007 APA and JAR, particularly with regard to further strengthening safeguarding issues”

“The contribution of services to improving outcomes for children and young people in this aspect (Staying Safe) is good. The Council’s analysis of its strengths and areas for development for this outcome area is consistent with the evidence”.

- 3.8 The indicators relevant to safeguarding (the ‘Stay Safe’ outcome from ‘Every Child Matters’) are attached at appendix 2. These indicators are part of a national framework and are quantitative rather than qualitative. Performance and/or comparisons lead to the red, amber, green (RAG) ratings.

The indicators show broadly strong performance in Derby as reflected in the APA/JAR reports, but currently, three indicators that are particularly relevant are red rated:

- NI59 Initial assessments carried out within 7 working days of referral – this was referred to in the JAR report noted below and performance is now lower. Performance in January 09 was at 63.1% completed within the target 7 days and at 59.3% for the year to the end of quarter 3, against a year end target of 70%
- NI60 Core assessments carried out within 35 working days of their commencement – 80.1% completed in January 09 and 79.5% for the year to the end of quarter 3, against a year end target of 88%.
- NI64 Child Protection Plans lasting 2 years or more – 15.3% at the last reporting period (Dec 08) against a year end target of 8%.

These are referred to in appendix 3.

- 3.9 The review in Derby has involved discussions with:

- Lead Officers for safeguarding
- Heads of Service
- Within social care teams
- The Derby Safeguarding Children Board (DSCB)
- The DSCB’s Quality Assurance Sub-Group.

- 3.10 Parallel work in partner agencies contributed to the discussion at the LSCB.

- 3.11 In these discussions, and against the specific background of the Haringey report, a number of strengths have been noted. These include:
- The localities structure that is being piloted in Derby is supporting ongoing discussion between professionals about the operation of thresholds for support and intervention in individual cases, providing a strong basis for safeguarding work. We have also carried out benchmarking work with a comparable authority (Stockton) on thresholds
 - There is a commitment to the auditing of case files by social care managers, even though the practice can be affected by other pressures and capacity issues
 - Overall, we have strong dialogue with partner agencies at all levels, from strategic through to the front line. This is a real strength in Derby, helped by the continuity of key players. There remains the challenge of maintaining the same level of dialogue with schools.
 - Notable improvements have been seen in multi-agency working and engagement over individual cases in the Locality 1 trailblazer project. Plans for coordination city-wide will provide the mechanism to drive forward effective implementation of integrated processes.
 - Transfer of cases from one team or service to another and transfers across authority boundaries are carried out responsibly and effectively. The view is taken, sometimes to the financial cost of Derby, that the child comes first and any arguments about 'ownership' should be resolved later
 - There is an established structure for review in the health agencies. A number of actions have been taken to strengthen systems following a report to the Trust Boards in January 2008. This work is ongoing, but a meeting of Core Health Service providers was held in January to address the Haringey reports. The outcomes have been included as appropriate in the actions noted in Appendix 3.
 - The Health Care Commission are to provide and oversee an Audit of Safeguarding Children activity in Health Providers commencing late February 2009.
- 3.12 Whilst overall performance is regarded as strong, there are areas which require attention. These can be broadly grouped under the following headings:
- Capacity and caseloads
 - The impact of the new electronic social care recording system
 - Staff training, induction, supervision and development
 - Case chronologies, analysis and audit
 - The nature of performance monitoring by the LSCB and partner agencies
 - Aspects of inter-agency work
 - The image of social work and morale of social workers.
- 3.13 It must be emphasised that all of these are in the context of the overall strength of our systems outlined above. All of these issues are covered in Appendix 3, along with the actions which are in hand or recommended to address them. These are set out according to the headings of the Haringey Joint Area Review.
- 3.14 The review by Lord Laming following the Haringey events was published on 12 March and will impact on aspects of this report. This will be taken into account in taking actions forward.

Background papers:

List of appendices:

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None

Appendix 1 – Implications

Appendix 2 – Stay Safe Performance Indicators

Appendix 3 – Review of Haringey findings

IMPLICATIONS

Financial

- 1.1 The Council's budget for 2009/10 includes additional funding of £263,000 to replace frontline social work capacity which has been lost due to the problems being experienced, locally and nationally, in the implementation of the electronic social care record. Funding is also included for the increased court costs (£200,000) relating to care proceedings and the costs of agency placements for children in care (£224,000).
- 1.2 This significant additional funding will not relieve the case loads referred to in the Appendix or support some of the necessary or desirable actions. These will continue to be pressures for consideration in future budget development and in relation to partnership contributions.

Legal

- 2.1 The Children Act 2004 (section 13) gives a particular role to Children's Services Authorities (CSA) in setting up the arrangements to secure co-operation among local partners through the DSCB. Derby City Council became a CSA on 1 January 2006 following the integration of its education and children's social care functions. Particular emphasis is placed on the roles of the Director and Lead Member for Children's Services. The LA is accountable for significant services which have lead and supporting roles in safeguarding children and young people.

Personnel

- 3.1 None in this report.

Equalities Impact

- 4.1 There are strong links between disadvantage and risks to the safety of children and young people. High quality, effective safeguarding procedures will make a significant contribution to promoting greater equality.

Corporate objectives and priorities for change

- 5.1 Specific actions relating to safeguarding children and young people are included under the corporate plan priority of 'Helping us all to be healthy, active and independent.'

