

**TELFORD & WREKIN COUNCIL**

**CABINET 21 JULY 2009**

**THE PROTECTION OF CHILDREN IN ENGLAND: THE LAMING REPORT  
AND GOVERNMENT RESPONSE**

**REPORT OF THE CORPORATE DIRECTOR: CHILDREN AND YOUNG  
PEOPLE**

1. **PURPOSE**

To brief Members on the content of the Laming report which was commissioned following the death of 'Baby P' in Haringey; the Government's response to Lord Laming's recommendations; and the implications for service delivery in Telford and Wrekin.

2. **RECOMMENDATIONS**

2.1 **That members note the contents of the report for information**

2.2 **That a further report is presented once the revised guidance is published to appraise Members of any further local implications**

3. **SUMMARY**

Lord Laming's report indicates that the national direction of travel in terms of legislation, guidance and practice for safeguarding children and protecting their welfare is sound but more needs to be done to make sure services are provided consistently and effectively for all children in need of help and protection. This is a view which is endorsed by the whole sector. The Government's response recognises this and has accepted all of his 58 recommendations. It has undertaken to ensure that 'best practice is universally applied in every area of the country'. Agencies in Telford & Wrekin are already engaged in further development of services.

4. **PREVIOUS MINUTES**

Not applicable

5. **INFORMATION**

5.1 **Background**

In November 2008, following the legal verdict on the death of Baby P, Lord Laming was asked by the Secretary of State for Children, Schools and

Families to report on "the progress being made across the country to implement effective arrangements for safeguarding children". His report was published on March 12<sup>th</sup> 2009.

Lord Laming was chosen to produce this report following his role in 2003 leading the national enquiry into the death of Victoria Climbié. Recommendations from that enquiry were instrumental in shaping the Every Child Matters programme and the subsequent Children Act 2004.

The Secretary of State for children published an initial response to Lord Laming's report which accepted all the recommendations and promised a detailed action plan to deliver them. This was published on 6 May 2009

## **5.2 Content of the Laming report**

Lord Laming makes it clear that nationally there continues to be widespread support from children's professionals for the Every Child Matters reforms as a whole and although he expresses general approval of the current legal framework and guidance for protecting children and promoting their welfare he makes it clear there that; "the need to protect children from significant harm and neglect is ever more challenging. There now needs to be a step change in the arrangements to protect children from harm - one of the main challenges is to ensure leaders of local services effectively translate policy, legislation and guidance into day-to-day practice on the frontline of every service". This is an imperative for all services working with children.

Although the majority of the recommendations are for central government to implement, a number are directed at Children's Trusts or Local Safeguarding Children Boards and many of the national recommendations have implications for local practice.

The main chapter headings and their coverage are:

- **Leadership and accountability** - from ministerial responsibility and central government departments through to local leadership and management across services, supported by effective performance management systems.
- **Support for children** - covering frontline practice, including early intervention, referral systems, and "thresholds" for support which can act as restrictive and inconsistent gateways to services. Also included are recommendations to improve the Integrated Children's System of electronic case management and supervision for social workers
- **Inter-agency working** - effective co-ordination between adult and child services, good practice in information sharing, and use of the Common Assessment Framework
- **Children's workforce** - the need for extensive remodelling of the children's social care workforce in particular, to address training, recruitment, retention and morale issues. Also concerns about the number and role of health visitors, the training of the children's health workforce including GPs and the resourcing and training of police child protection teams.

- **Improvement and challenge** - new arrangements for inspection of local safeguarding, and better use of serious case reviews to promote learning and service improvement
- **Organisation and finance** - this discusses improvements to the working of Local Safeguarding Children Boards (LSCB) and their relationship with the Children's Trust Partnership Board including that the Director of Children's Services and Lead Member should be members of both partnerships. In addition there is an expectation that 2 lay members from the local community will be appointed to LSCBs). The Laming report also recommends that the Department of Children Schools and families should ensure Children's services have sufficient resources for early intervention and prevention services can respond to all children identified as vulnerable or "in need"
- **Legal considerations** - the need for good understanding within the children's workforce of current legislation regarding safeguarding and promoting children's welfare, and action to reduce delays in court proceedings.

The report also recommends the establishment (for an initial period of 3 years), of a national Safeguarding Delivery Unit, reporting directly to the Cabinet Sub-Committee on Families, Children and Young People. The recommended role of the unit would include;

- setting timescales for the delivery of the recommendations and challenging and supporting children's trusts to deliver those that relate to them
- supporting the development of national priorities and KPIs on safeguarding for all frontline services
- supporting the implementation of the recommendations of serious case reviews; more effective learning of lessons.
- gathering information on best practice and "what works" in particular to provide advice to local authorities, health and police on referral and assessment systems
- commissioning training on child protection and safeguarding for senior political leaders and service managers.

### **5.3 The local situation**

Unlike some other authorities Telford & Wrekin has continued to audit services against the original Laming report. As a result of this, together with the strength of local safeguarding partnership arrangements; the preparing for, undergoing and responding to the Joint Area Review (JAR) inspection in 2008; and an internal review following the Haringey JAR report, we had anticipated many of the likely elements of the report. Some work has already been completed, and more is planned to address those recommendations for local action.

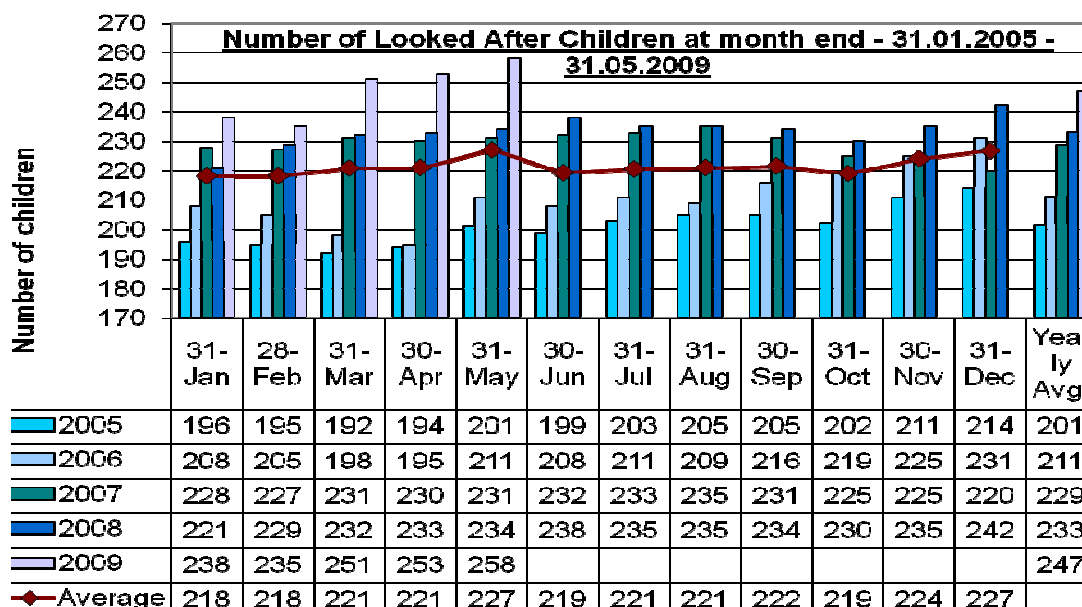
For example;

- We have begun to increase social work capacity and discussions as to how to strengthen links between social care and the Cluster multi-

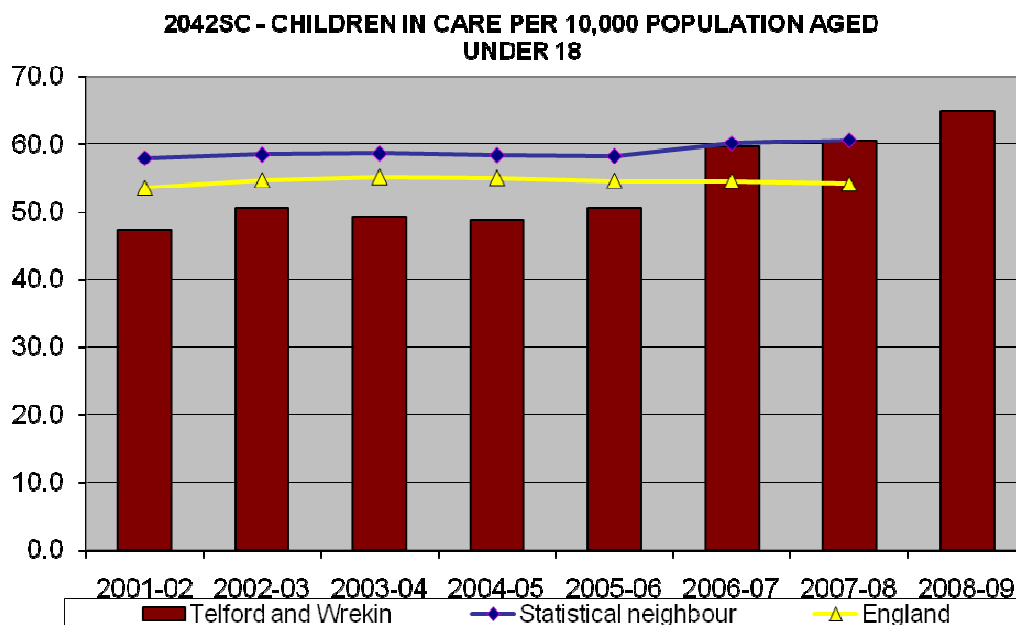
agency assessment and support arrangements and to ensure that these add maximum value are progressing well.

- Safeguarding arrangements at the Princess Royal Hospital have recently been reviewed and strengthened
- Safeguarding is an integral part of our current Children and Young People's Plan (CYPP), however we have strengthened this further by making protecting children from abuse an explicit Children's Trust Board outcome priorities.
- A Performance Framework for the Safeguarding Children Board has been developed which includes indicators relating to staff (supervision, training, safe recruitment, turnover and sickness, decision-making and managerial oversight), agency accountability, meeting objectives, customers views, quality of practice and effectiveness of meetings as well as national KPIs. The JAR inspection was complimentary about partners' engagement in our Local Safeguarding Children's Board (LSCB), which already has a different (independent) chair to the chair of the Children's Trust Board. A review of membership and terms of reference of the LSCB is currently being undertaken.

As is the case nationally, the number of children being identified as needing protection and of those coming into care as a result of this has increased significantly since the media interest in Haringey. In mid-November, there were 232 children in the care of Telford & Wrekin. At the end of May this had risen to 257. Although this is a particularly sharp increase, it reflects a longer term trend, whereby the number of children in care in Telford & Wrekin has increased by an average of 30.7% since 2005.



The table below illustrates the increase both locally and nationally, expressed as the number of children in care per 10,000 population.



To respond to this level of demand and to ensure the best possible practice locally, there is a need to:

- Further increase capacity within the children's social care frontline workforce to reduce over large caseloads and, thereby, allow for more in depth work with children and their families.
- Continue to improve recruitment and retention of social workers.
- Increase capacity in other services which are required to support care proceedings and children in care such as the council's legal services and the number of foster carers available
- Strengthen the support from social workers to the team around the child arrangements to further encourage inter agency support to families
- evaluate the extent to which current supervision arrangements challenge practice and meet the support needs of staff, and ensure arrangements are tailored appropriately whatever their level of skill and experience.
- provide more post qualification training for SWs and inter-agency training.
- Improve the Integrated Children's System (ICS) (electronic case management). (NB this is a national issue resulting from strict constraints on any local interpretations of the system)
- Build on existing referral and assessment arrangements for adult service users who are also parents, in particular via the Think Family pathfinder.

Some of these measures will be addressed by the implementation of the Government's action plan as outlined below but in addition we have commissioned an external programme of practice research and organisational analysis to ensure the effectiveness of referral and assessment arrangements. The outcome of this will inform our response to

a number of the Laming recommendations such as 'ensuring that intake/duty teams have sufficient training and expertise' and 'ensuring that early intervention and preventative services have the capacity to respond to all children and families identified and vulnerable or in need'.

#### **5.4 Government's response and action plan**

As noted above the Government have accepted all Lord Laming's recommendations and provided a response and action plan in respect of each. The recommendations and this response are attached as Appendix 1.

Key aspects of this response include:

- The establishment of the recommended delivery unit on a cross-Government basis, working alongside the newly created Chief Adviser on the Safety of Children.
- The establishment of new statutory targets
- A commitment to revise the current statutory guidance 'Working Together to Safeguard Children' by the end of the year
- Revised guidance on Lead Members and Directors of Children's Services
- A new school inspection framework from September 2009 which has a stronger focus on safeguarding
- A request for the Social Work Task Force to advise on matters such as supervision requirements; appropriate caseloads; and the reform of the Integrated Children's System
- The development of guidance on referral and assessment systems for children affected by parental difficulties such as domestic violence
- The development of a Social Work reform programme covering training, recruitment and retention, supported by an investment of £58 million nationally
- The development of a programme of action by the Department of Health relating to healthcare professionals including GPs
- The development of a new Strategic Framework by the Home Office in relation to 'protective services' including child protection
- A review of court fees incurred in the undertaking of care proceedings

#### **5.2 Equality and Diversity**

To be protected from abuse or neglect is a fundamental and equal right of all children.

In his report Lord Laming states 'It would be unreasonable to expect that the sudden and unpredictable outburst by an adult towards a child can be prevented. But that is entirely different from the failure to protect a child or young person already identified and being in danger of deliberate harm. The death of a child in these circumstances is a reproach to us all'

#### **5.3 Environmental Impact**

None

#### **5.4 Legal Comment**

“The May 2009 “The protection of children in England: action plan – The Government’s response to Lord Laming” published by the DCSF makes it clear that revised and further statutory guidance / work programmes and reports will be issued during the course of 2009 and beyond. Statutory guidance is published under Section 7 Local Authority Social Services Act 1970, which requires local authorities in their social services functions to act under the general guidance of the Secretary of State. Such guidance should be complied with, unless local circumstances indicate exceptional reasons that justify a variation”

#### **5.5 Links with Corporate Priorities**

The protection of children is essential if the council is to meet its Community Priority to ‘give children and young people the best possible start in their lives’

#### **5.7 Financial Implications**

The Government have committed to investing £58 million in national initiatives to support the recruitment, retention and training of Social Workers.

The implementation of the recommendations of the Laming report will have financial implications for the council. The extent of these will need to be assessed as further guidance becomes available and local plans are developed. These implications will be included as part of the overall consideration of all pressures within this area of work as part of the Service and Financial Planning process

#### **6. WARD IMPLICATIONS**

These are borough wide issues

#### **7. BACKGROUND PAPERS**

The Protection of Children in England; a progress report  
March 2009 The Stationery Office

The Protection of Children in England: action plan  
The government’s response to Lord Laming  
May 2009 The Stationary Office

Both documents can be found on the DCSF website [www.dcsf.gov.uk](http://www.dcsf.gov.uk)

***Report prepared by***

***Anne Cole***

***Safeguarding Advisory Service Manager***

***Tel: 01952 385652***