

CHILDREN, YOUNG PEOPLE AND LEARNING COMMITTEE

9 July 2009

THE PROTECTION OF CHILDREN IN ENGLAND: A PROGRESS REPORT BY LORD LAMING AND THE GOVERNMENT'S RESPONSE TO THOSE RECOMMENDATIONS

REPORT OF THE EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR OF CHILDREN'S SERVICES

Strategic Priority: Learning City

**Corporate Improvement Priority: Delivering Customer Focused Services,
Improving Partnership Working to Deliver 'One City'**

1. Why has this report come to Committee

- 1.1 This report is to inform the Children, Young People and Learning Scrutiny Committee of progress made in relation to Lord Laming's review, The Protection of Children in England: A Progress Report, and also the Government's response to those recommendations.
- 1.2 This report will also set out the actions taken by Sunderland Children's Trust Laming Task and Finish Group in taking forward the recommendations.

3. Background

- 3.1 Following the death of Baby Peter in Haringey in 2008, Lord Laming was asked by the Rt Hon Ed Balls, MP Secretary of State for Children, Schools and Families to prepare an independent report which assessed progress being made in the delivery of arrangements to protect children, and to identify any barriers to effective, consistent implementation and how these might be overcome.
- 3.2 Lord Laming's task was to evaluate the good practice developed since the publication of the report of his Independent Statutory Inquiry (2003) following the death of Victoria Climbié, to identify the barriers that are now preventing good practice becoming standard practice, and recommend actions to be taken to make systematic improvements in safeguarding children across the country.
- 3.3 The report, published on 12 March 2009, makes a total of 58 recommendations, divided under the following headings:
 - Progress
 - Leadership and accountability;
 - Support for children;

- Inter-agency working;
- Children's workforce;
- Improvement and challenge;
- Organisation and finance; and
- Legal

3.4 On 6 May 2009, the Government published an Action Plan to take forward Lord Laming's recommendations.

3.5 In accepting all of the recommendations from Lord Laming's report, the Government has recognised the problems faced by local authority children's services departments, particularly the national issues in recruiting and retaining high quality social workers.

4. Current position

4.1 At its meeting on 21 April 2009, the Sunderland Children's Trust Board recognised that in order to implement the Laming recommendations and thereby improve safeguarding outcomes for children, key agencies working with children must give appropriate consideration to the report. The Board approved three key proposals, put forward by Councillor Pat Smith, Chair of the Children's Trust:

- that individual partners be invited to report to their respective executive bodies on the implications of the Laming report;
- that partners each develop a Laming action plan; and
- that the Children's Trust establishes a task and finish Laming Review action group to develop a Sunderland plan.

4.2 On 5 May 2009, the first meeting of the Laming Task and Finish Group took place, to set out the remit of the group and to agree a way forward in order to ensure that a Sunderland Children's Trust Laming plan was developed to take into account the plans of all partner agencies and particularly those of the Sunderland Safeguarding Children Board.

4.3 Subsequent meetings of individual agency groups and the Laming Task and Finish Group have taken place to further develop the initial action plan, and to incorporate the Government's response to the Laming recommendations.

4.4 A Children's Trust draft action plan (Appendix 1) has been developed which sets out Lord Laming's Recommendations, the Government's response and the individual agency actions.

5. Recommendations

5.1 The Children, Young People and Learning Scrutiny Committee are asked to receive this report and associated action plan and to provide scrutiny and comment.

6. Background Papers

- 6.1 The Victoria Climbié Inquiry, Report of an Inquiry by Lord Laming, 2003
Every Child Matters, DSCF, 2003
- 6.2 The Protection of Children in England: A Progress Report, The Lord Laming, 2009
- 6.3 The protection of children in England: action plan. The Government's response to Lord Laming, 2009.