

From: Rosalind Turner, Managing Director, Children, Families and Education and Mrs Hohler, Cabinet member for Children, Families and Education
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To: Children, Families and Education Policy Overview Committee

September 18th 2009

Subject: **The Government's Action Plan in response to the Lord Laming report, 'The Protection of Children in England; A Progress Report'**

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Classification: Unrestricted

For Information

Introduction

1 (1) In November 2008, following the death of Baby P, Ed Balls, the Secretary of State for Children, Schools and Families commissioned Lord Laming to report on "the progress being made across the country to implement effective arrangements for safeguarding children". His report was published in March 2009. "The Protection of Children in England: A Progress Report" made 58 recommendations. These recommendations have been accepted in full by Government and developed in to an Action Plan which was published on the 6th May 2009.

(2) The Kent Safeguarding Children Board (KSCB) have provided summaries of these reports for all agencies and disseminated the findings through the board and its sub groups. Both summaries are attached for your information.

Key Points

2 (1) The Government have accepted Lord Laming's recommendations in full except for a proposal to ring fence budgets ensuring they are adequate to meet local needs. However, there are many positives not least a commitment to fund a package of £58 million in support of social work reform. A proportion of this money is targeted at recruitment, retention and developing social work competency.

(2) The Action Plan reinforces the fundamental principles of Every Child Matters components; safeguarding and interagency work, by stating that "Keeping

children safe is everyone's responsibility". It describes the challenge is not only to have the right legislation, policies, systems and structures in place but most importantly to ensure we achieve consistent high quality practice and standards within the day-to-day support services. The Government is therefore planning to:

- **Strengthen leadership and accountability.**

Roger Singleton has been appointed to the new role of Chief Adviser on the Safety of Children and will advise Government on the creation of a cross-Government National Safeguarding Delivery Unit (NSDU) whose objective will be to improve safeguarding standards.

- **Strengthen the inspection framework.**

Ofsted have designed more rigorous inspection arrangements (Comprehensive Area Assessment) covering the role of all partners and including unannounced annual inspections of Children's Social Services referrals teams. It has also introduced changes to the new inspection framework from September 2009 which will grade schools on their safeguarding arrangements. Any school receiving a grade of 4 will most likely be awarded an inadequate overall.

- **Clarify local leadership and accountability**

The Children's Trust is accountable for ensuring that services deliver better outcomes and specifically accountable for delivering the Children and Young People's Plan. The Local Safeguarding Children's Boards (LSCB) are responsible for challenging the Children's Trust Board on how they keep children safe. The two bodies are seen as complimentary. It is presumed the LSCB is chaired by a person independent of the agencies.

(3) Directors of Children's Services (DCSs) and Lead Members for Children's Services have central roles. DCSs have lead responsibility for improving outcomes for children in their areas. Lead Members are politically accountable for ensuring the local authority fulfils its legal responsibilities for safeguarding and promoting the welfare of children and should also provide the political leadership needed for the effective co-ordination of work with other relevant agencies such as the police and health service.

- **Supporting the front line.**

The Government takes the view that "Only a strong, confident workforce can make the right decisions and provide the right support". A number of recommendations are made in respect of strengthening early intervention, information and assessment. The Police will be required to develop a new Strategic Framework for delivering protective services and the Home Office will ensure that specialist training is made available. The Health Service will receive new statutory targets and NHS Chief Executives will have accountabilities clarified in addition to developing health visiting and midwifery services to meet safeguarding expectations. Social Work reform is identified as a priority and a £57million social work transformation fund has been announced.

The Social Work Task Force

3 (1) In response to concerns for the social work profession, the Government has created the Social Work Task Force. The Task Force is tasked with reviewing the Integrated Children's System (ICS) as a priority and published its first report on 5th May 2009 in which it concluded that ICS should be reformed. The Task Force is currently conducting a 'Call for Evidence' exercise with Social Workers and Local Authorities. Kent County Council has taken part in this work sending social workers to the regional events and by agreeing to take part in a planned questionnaire of social workers. The Task Force published its first report on 5th May 2009 and plans to publish a further report in July. Full recommendations and a final report will be made to Government in October 2009.

Kent County Council Independent Review of safeguarding arrangements in Kent

4 (1) Following a request from the Secretary of State on the 11th December 2008 for all councils with statutory children's social care responsibilities to undertake an internal quality assurance review against the recommendations of the Haringey mini JAR", and the County Council's resolve on the 11th December to seek its own urgent review of "high risk" cases, Members commissioned an independent review of safeguarding arrangements in Kent overseen by its Chief Executive, Mr Gilroy. The findings and recommendations of Phase One of this review were reported to the Children's Champion Board on the 12th December 2009. The findings of Phase Two will be reported to the Children's Champion Board on the 21st July.

(2) The Phase One of the review concluded that "there was evidence of sound professional practice within Children's Social Services, with appropriate child protection plans, demonstrating satisfactory risk-assessment and multi-disciplinary and inner-agency working"

The Current Position

5 (1) The Government Action Plan in response to Lord Laming's report consists of 58 recommendations with timescales. Not all of the recommendations require a response by the County Council at this moment in time. Some actions are dependent upon national developments and guidance being published before the Council can act. In particular the revision of Working Together expected December 2009, the work of the Social Work Task Force, expected October 2009, developments planned by the New National Safeguarding Delivery Unit (NSDU) and developments within the new national inspection frameworks for School Inspection (September 2009) and the Comprehensive Area Assessment.

(2) Work has started to review and identify what is needed by the Council, the Kent Children Safeguarding Board and the Kent Children Trust. Further reports will be provided to the Children, Families and Education Policy Overview Committee once Working Together and the Social Work Task Force recommendations are published however in respect of specific recommendations for Local Authorities that

can be dealt with now, the following sets out the current position against the key recommendations relating to local authorities and managing risk ;

- **Appointment of a senior experienced safeguarding manager when the Director of Children's Services (DCS) does not have direct experience.** Mr Bill Anderson is Director for Children's Social Services operations and all of his Heads of Service are also experienced social work professionals. In addition CFE has an "off line" safeguarding Policy and Performance unit with a Head of Service, Mrs Kay Weiss, who is also an experienced senior manager with a background in social work operations. The new proposed restructure of CFE takes account of the Laming recommendations and the proposed Director for Vulnerable Children will be required to be a qualified, experienced safeguarding and child protection senior manager.
- **DCSs must regularly review all points of referral** The Council already has an established programme of quality assuring social work practice. Approximately 10% of all open CSS cases are audited each year by the Policy and Performance unit. A case audit of referrals was completed in October 2008. An audit of CSS referral teams, systems and processes, including case files has recently been completed. The audit programme, outcomes and actions plans will be reported to the Managing Director for CFE, Lead Member, and Cabinet from April 2009 as agreed and discussed at the Special Meeting of the Children's Champion Board on the 12th February 2009. Moreover, duty and referral teams will be subject to annual unannounced inspections by Ofsted from June 2009. The policy and performance unit is currently exploring the possibility of undertaking multi disciplinary audits of referral and assessment processes and practice under the umbrella of the Kent Safeguarding Children Board in order to identify learning and improve integrated service responses.
- **Every Children's Trust must ensure it takes account of the needs of children in need of protection** Kent Children's Trust has established a model for identifying and analysing need to inform strategic and local planning and the Children and Young Persons Plan (CYPP). This work is still in development and will be reviewed when the new NSDU work programme and revised Working Together is published
- **Children's Trusts must ensure that all assessments of need for children includes evidence from all professionals and includes direct contact with the child** CSS currently require all social workers assessing Children in Need to have direct contact with the child as part of the assessment process. This area of practice is monitored during practice audits and will be reviewed when the revised working together is published. All multi-agency policies and guidance should already contain this as good practice however this area of practice will be identified for action in a report for the Children Trust and reviewed accordingly.
- **Local authorities must ensure that Children in Need as defined by S17 of the Children Act 1989 have early access to specialist services and**

support to meet needs. CFE and the Kent Children's Trust is targeting and prioritising vulnerable children in its planning and service development arrangements based upon analysis of need. This will be strengthened and clarified by the development of a Preventative Strategy recently commissioned by the newly appointed Managing Director for CFE. It will take account of revisions in Working Together published in December 2009.

- **The Social Work Task Force should establish guidelines on guaranteed supervision time for social workers** CSS have clear policy and guidance for the supervision of social workers. All social workers within CSS are supervised by a qualified social work professional. The JAR inspectors remarked on Kent's commitment to supervision was good. The position will be reviewed once the social work reform programme recommendations are published.
- **The Integrated Children's System (ICS) is identified for action in the Government Action Plan and as a priority for the social work task force.** Further to the findings of the County Council's Independent Safeguarding Review and the findings of an internal review of ICS commissioned by Mr Anderson, and undertaken by the Policy and Performance Unit, Kent suspended the use of parts of ICS in March 2009 as a result of its adverse impact on CSS operations. The Social Work Task Force has subsequently recommended the national requirement for ICS should be simplified. Work is ongoing within Kent to re design a user friendly product and will involve consultation with service users.
- **The DCSF should establish statutory representation on Local Safeguarding Children boards from schools, adult mental health and adult drug and alcohol** The Kent Children Safeguarding Board (KSCB) have representation from adult mental health services, Kent Adult Social Services, Adult drug and Alcohol services. School representation is under consideration and will be discussed at the next Executive Board meeting. Guidance in respect of school representation will be clarified in revised Working Together.
- **The Social Work Task Force should develop a social work supply strategy to include a career framework, the creation of Advanced Social Work professional and national guidance setting out maximum case loads.** CSS have a local recruitment and retention strategy linked to Kent Social Work Degree courses and career progression. Career development for social workers is currently under review and will take account of national developments and guidance which will be set out in the Social Work Reform programme in autumn 2009. CFE is already part of the Newly Qualified Social Workers pilot scheme. The scheme which is for relatively small numbers and is grant funded. Children's Social Services took the decision in 2008 to roll it out to all newly qualified social workers.

- **LSCBs should ensure all Serious Case Review panel chairs and Serious Case Review authors are independent of the board.** This is current practice.
- **The LSCB and the Children's Trust should not be chaired by the same person and should have senior representation.** The Kent Safeguarding Children Board is chaired by Mrs Oena Windibank, Assistant Director, East Kent Health. The board is seeking to appoint an independent chair. Representatives are at Director and Assistant Director level. Lay members to the board will be appointed following publication of the revised working together

Recommendation

Policy Overview Committee are requested to note the contents of the reports and the continuing developments in respect of safeguarding of children.

Kay Weiss

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8th June 2009