

Safeguarding Children Briefing



THE PROTECTION OF CHILDREN IN ENGLAND: ACTION PLAN

BACKGROUND

On 12th March, Lord Laming published The Protection of Children in England: A Progress Report into child protection which followed the death of Baby P. Aged 17 months, Baby Peter died after suffering months of abuse and neglect at the hands of his mother, her boyfriend and their lodger in August 2007. He had been subject to a child protection plan in Haringey at the time of his death. The Government accepted all of his recommendations and promised to issue a more detailed response later on.

GOVERNMENT ACTION PLAN

The [action plan](#) was published on the 6th May setting out the Government's detailed response to Lord Laming's recommendations. It outlines how all of central Government will work together with local Government and front line services including teachers, teaching assistants, school governors, staff in Children's Centres and early years settings, child care workers and other partners working with children to drive forward reform of child protection services across England

Announcing the plan, Ed Balls, stated that the Government is committed to ensuring "greater openness", enabling the public to scrutinise child protection agencies better. It will also invest more in training and support for frontline services adding that the reforms were particularly aimed at "backing" the good work that is done in social work and attracting good candidates to the profession.

KEY ACTIONS

- A new cross-Government "safeguarding delivery unit" to drive improvements across frontline services and support and challenge local authorities and Children's Trusts. Sir Roger Singleton has been appointed as chief adviser on child safety to report annually to Parliament on how to effectively implement child protection across Britain. There will be a group of senior children's professionals to support Sir Roger, including those from the NSPCC, National Health Service, Ofsted, Association of Directors Services and police;

- The National Safeguarding Delivery Unit's core functions are to be
 - identifying and promoting good practice and bringing greater co-ordination, coverage and complementarity to the various sources of improvement and support on good practice that already exist;
 - undertaking gap analysis to identify where more support is needed and, as a consequence, commissioning tools or products to meet identified needs;
 - developing (or commissioning) a small number of definitive practice reports which will help the front line, e.g. on the way various thresholds operate across the country. Such studies could operate by bringing together teams from partners on a 'deep dive' approach using established methodologies. Monitor and challenge progress on the implementation of the recommendations in Lord Laming's report by:
 - producing comparative analysis on variations in local performance and the use of different indicators for improving outcomes and services;
 - sourcing information on progress from Government departments and other partners;
 - reflecting the view point of the front line on progress by making use of secondments of practitioners into the Unit and/or by developing a close 'family' of practitioners that it can readily access to 'test the water' on whether national, regional and local initiatives are really making a difference to outcomes for children; and supporting the Chief Adviser in producing an annual public report to Parliament and in e.g. giving evidence to Select Committee.
- An extra £58m is to be put into the recruitment and retention of social workers designed to increase capacity in the system and the funding would be available from 2009-11. It is in addition to £73m already pledged by the DCSF to improve support for social workers from 2008-11
- A series of Newly Qualified Social Workers pilot schemes across the country to help newly qualified professionals gain experience.
- Funding for a new practice-based Masters degree in social work starting in 2011.
- From this month, a recruitment campaign will attempt to persuade 500 former social workers to return to the profession.
- The Government will also sponsor 200 university places from September, create a new masters degree by 2011 and take steps to improve on-the-job training. It says the extra funding will bring total investment in the workforce to £109m over the next two years.
- A new Advanced Social Work Professional Status programme to help retain experienced social workers
- A new framework for a rolling programme of inspections on a three year cycle of safeguarding and looked after children. Schools will be graded on a scale of 1 (outstanding) to 4 (inadequate) on standards of safeguarding. A school awarded grade 4 will probably be graded inadequate on its overall educational performance.
- 2 members of the public are to sit on child protection boards to improve services being provided.

- Serious Case Reviews Guidance to be reviewed
 - The Government will publish a revised Chapter 8 of *Working Together to Safeguard Children* for consultation by July 2009 so that important improvements can be put in place as quickly as possible. Ofsted's SCR evaluation framework consultation document will be published July 2009.
 - Ofsted will share copies of Serious Case Reviews in confidence with partner inspectorates so that the implications for frontline inspections and for joint safeguarding inspections can be fully assessed and learned.
 - Ofsted will include a website link so that all interested organisations can easily access the published executive summaries of Serious Case Reviews.
 - Ofsted will produce regular six monthly reports covering the lessons of Serious Case Reviews. One of these each year will be a summary report covering all SCRs in the year and will consider the format of the second interim report to enable more in-depth analysis and thematic reports where beneficial
- Revise *Working together to safeguard children* issued for consultation by July 2009. Published by end of this year.
- The publication of the Loughborough University research on Local Safeguarding Children Boards later this year. An interim report on the finding will be published in June. Practice guidance will be developed in light of its findings in October 2009
- The LSCB to be responsible for challenging every member of the Children's Trust, through the Children's Trust Board, on their success in ensuring that children and young people are kept safe.
- The LSCB to publish an annual report on the effectiveness of arrangements locally, and the contribution and activities of each local partner, for keeping children safe.
- There will now be a presumption that the LSCB is chaired by someone independent of the local agencies so that the LSCB can exercise its local challenge function effectively.
- The Children's Trust is accountable for ensuring that services deliver better outcomes, with the Children's Trust Board being specifically accountable for overseeing the delivery of the Children and Young People's Plan.
- Children's trusts and LSCBs must not be chaired by the same person. This will be reflected in revised regulations and revised *Working Together to Safeguard Children* guidance
- The Government also promised to overhaul the Integrated Children's System –
- A more rigorous inspection framework including a new set of national indicators by the end of September 2009. These revised indicators will form the basis of the targets set by Children's Trusts
- Ed Balls has stated that he is considering Lord Laming's proposals for funds to be 'ring-fenced' to ensure resources do get through to the front line.

OTHER KEY DOCUMENTS

First Report Of The Social Work Task Force

The Government has also published the first report of the Social Work Task Force - a letter from Task Force Chair, Moira Gibb, to Ed Balls and Alan Johnson. The letter sets out the Task Force's advice on implementing Lord Laming's recommendations, including about the future of the Integrated Children's System. The Task Force's letter also sets out the key messages emerging from its extensive consultation with front line workers, service users and others across children and adult's services, and opens the Task Force's Call for Evidence.

Safeguarding arrangements (Singleton review) –

Sir Roger Singleton, as Chair of the Independent Safeguarding Authority, review of safeguarding arrangements in independent schools, non-maintained special schools and all boarding schools in England. The Government accepted all Sir Roger Singleton's recommendations and published a full [response](#) on 6th May.

Letter from Sir Roger Singleton, chief adviser on the safety of children, to the Secretary of State, Ed Balls.

The Secretary of State's letter of 17 November to Lord Laming, commissioning his report.

The Government's interim response of 12 March to Lord Laming.

For further information



01622 694859



www.kscb.org.uk



**KSCB,
Sessions House,
Room 2:60
County Road
Maidstone
Kent, ME14 1XQ**



kscb@kent.gov.uk

Written by Penny Davies, Kent Safeguarding Children Board Manager