

Committee:	Overview and Scrutiny Committee
Date:	21 st April 2009
Subject:	Safeguarding
Responsible Officers:	Paul Clark Corporate Director of Children's Services
Portfolio Holder:	Councillor Christine Bednell, Portfolio Holder for Children's Services
Exempt:	No
Enclosures:	Lord Lamming - Recommendations

Section 1 – Summary

This report sets out the key actions taken by the LSCB following the death of 'Baby P'.

This report is to inform overview and scrutiny.

The sad death of 'Baby P' has prompted a range of actions from central and local government, and considerable media comment.

Actions have been taken to audit cases, brief councillors, support staff, respond to draft guidance and to the 'Laming report'.

Section 2 – Report

The sad death of 'Baby P' plus the deaths of other children in Doncaster and other local authorities has focussed the spotlight on the multi-agency actions taken to protect the most vulnerable of children.

The work of safeguarding is taken forward by the LSCB and the council, in

particular Children's Services have a major part to play in that work.

Since the initial report of the death, criminal trial, serious case review and other actions the LSCB has:

- Asked agencies to check their work with children with similar characteristics as 'P'.
- Set up a special version of the Audit Committee of the LSCB –
 - Chaired by the vice chair of LSCB, a GP.
 - Tasked to review agencies response to a more detailed request for safeguarding practice review.
- Issued good practice leaflets to all agencies
- Reviewed the representation and governance of the LSCB membership
- Briefed Cabinet
- Briefed Chief Executive, Portfolio Holder and leaders of the opposition
- Issued a practice note to staff
- Invited portfolio holders to visit and talk through practice with social workers

Current Situation

- Children's Services has through its workforce strategy maintained a high level of permanent qualified social workers.
- A small growth in the workforce is in the budget for 2009/2010.
- Practice development seminars are held with staff.
- All cases are allocated, and supervision and monitoring are up to date.
- Workloads are high and the referrals have increased and stay at a high level.
- Members Safeguarding training is in progress.
- The government response to the Laming Report (*recommendations attached*) is being developed, beyond the initial acceptance to detailed requirements expected in May 2009.

WHY Change is Needed?

The level of public concern at the apparent failure of the Safeguarding system has provoked a government enquiry and response.

The response suggests the basic system is sound, but detailed attention to :

- Social work staffing and training
- Multi-agency information sharing
- Speedy evidence based action in cases, with clear multi-agency agreed plans
- Training for senior managers not trained in Child Protection
- Adequate resources
- Health - clearer focus on safeguarding
- Reviewed governance for Officer, Portfolio Holders and Chief Executives.

Summary

Harrow LSCB and Harrow Council have taken action to review:

- Practice
- Co-operation
- Support
- Monitoring

The outcomes suggest that whilst never being complacent a good multi-agency system is in place and works well to protect children.

The system is under pressure due to increased workload & media pressure on staff.

The detail of practice and process will be reviewed after the LSCB audit is complete and government guidance is issued.

Section 3 – Further Information

None provided

Section 4 - Contact Details and Background Papers

Contact:

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Background Papers: