

# LONDON BOROUGH OF HARROW

Agenda item:

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<b>Meeting:</b>	Cabinet
<b>Date:</b>	20 May 2003
<b>Subject:</b>	Victoria Climbié Report, Self Assessment Audit
<b>Key decision:</b>	Yes
<b>Responsible Chief Officer:</b>	Chief Executive
<b>Relevant Portfolio Holder:</b>	Cllr Margaret Davine
<b>Status:</b>	Part 1
<b>Ward:</b>	All
<b>Enclosures:</b>	Appendix 1 – Recommendations from the Inquiry into the circumstances of Victoria Climbié’s death  Appendix 2 – Self Audit – Traffic Light presentation ( Colour copies of this appendix have been circulated to Members of Cabinet only)

## 1. **Summary**

- 1.1 To receive the completed Self Assessment Audit completed by this authority and returned to the Social Services Inspectorate on 30<sup>th</sup> April 2003

## 2. **Recommendations ( for decision by Cabinet)**

### 2.1 **Cabinet is asked to note the content of the Audit returned to the SSI**

**Reason:** To recognise the significance of this return and that we have been able to record a good level of compliance with practice requirements in this major service responsibility

## 3 **Consultation with Ward Councillors**

- 3.1 Not applicable

## 4 **Policy Context (Including Relevant Previous Decisions)**

- 4.1 Not applicable

## **5 Relevance to Corporate Priorities**

5.1 Children's services are a major responsibility for the local authority

## **6 Background Information**

6.1 The Inquiry chaired by Sir Herbert Laming into the circumstances of Victoria Climbié's death and her engagement with various London borough's, published in January 2003, contained 108 recommendations (appendix 1). Of these the Department of Health, through the Social Services Inspectorate, required local authorities to complete a self audit assessment checklist by the end of April.

6.2 The completed audit was returned to the SSI on time, and is available in the Group Offices. The document contains detailed text in relation to all the recommendations that the SSI included within the Self-Audit.

6.3 The Audit Checklist was structured within 7 standards:

Referral

Assessment

Allocation, service provision and closure

Guidance

Training and development

Organisation and management

Governance

Our performance has been scored against a scale of 1 to 4 against each of these standards with, in summary, 1 being the lowest and 4 the highest. You will see from the appended traffic light presentation (appendix 2) that we scored 4, Very Effective in relation to Referrals and 3, Satisfactory against all the other standards.

On only one specific recommendation, 57 "*Directors of Social Services must ensure that social work staff are made aware of how to access effectively information concerning vulnerable children which may be held in other countries*", have we scored ourselves below 3. This is an issue that requires action on a broader basis than any single authority can take and which we are taking up with other London boroughs.

6.4 This checklist has been prepared in discussion with our local partners on the Harrow Area Child Protection Committee with particular reference to the police and health agencies.

6.5 The SSI have not required authorities to respond to all the recommendations in the Laming Report as a number of them are being considered further within government and we expect that relevant considerations will be incorporated in the awaited Green Paper on Children's services expected in the Spring.

6.6 This return will be considered by the SSI as a significant contribution to the round of Performance Information that the social services department is required to provide to the SSI and will be discussed in the formal Annual Review Meeting in July. This will in turn feed into the Star rating that is given to our performance in social services.

## **7 Consultation**

7.1 There has been consultation and partnership working in the preparation of this return with ACPC members.

## 8 **Finance Observations**

- 8.1 In the main these recommendations are concerned with professional practice standards, basic procedures, effective infrastructure support to front line staff and ensuring practice competence. As such they all have some financial implications in order to ensure that the teams are up to strength, supervised, supported and managed and with functioning business systems in place. Some of the recommendations, notably, 52, 53, 54, and 43 relate to responsibilities where finances have to be available to ensure the adequacy of the workforce and support systems.
- 8.2 The children's budget was increased at the beginning of this financial year as part of the overall uplift for social services, and this response has been made on the basis that action in relation to these recommendations is contained within budget.

## 9 **Legal Observations**

- 9.1 These recommendations and our responses are based on practice requirements of the Children Act 1989 and Government guidance issued specifically in relation to working with children and in developing partnership working across agencies.

## 10 **Conclusion**

- 10.1 Cabinet is asked to note this report and return of the Self Assessment Audit to the SSI

## 11. **Background Papers**

- 11.1 The Victoria Climbié Inquiry, HMSO January 2003

Any person wishing to inspect the background papers should telephone 0208 424 1356

## 12. **Author**

- 12.1 Joyce Markham, Chief Executive, 0208 424 1183