

Report to: **Children's Services Scrutiny Committee**

Date: **26 September 2006**

By: **Director of Children's Services**

Title of report: **Safeguarding Children – Member and Senior Management Oversight of Services**

Purpose of report: **To advise Scrutiny Committee of the systems in place for senior managers and Members to ensure that services to safeguard children are properly co-ordinated and managed effectively.**

RECOMMENDATIONS

Scrutiny Committee is recommended to:

- 1. Note the systems in place for oversight of the safeguarding work of children's social care and the findings of the Lead Member visits and senior manager file audits.**
 - 2. Agree to receive an annual report on the monitoring and audits undertaken by the Lead Member and senior managers.**
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1. Financial Appraisal

1.1 There are no financial implications. The report describes services that are already provided from within Children's Services budgets.

2. Supporting Information

2.1 In 2003 the Victoria Climbié Inquiry by Lord Laming was published. This report included two recommendations about Member and senior manager oversight of work undertaken by social care staff:

- that senior managers inspect, at least once every three months, a random selection of case files and supervision notes; and
- senior managers and relevant Councillors regularly visit intake teams in their children's services department, and to report their findings to the chief executive and social services committee.

2.2 In February 2005 local social care services for children were inspected by inspectors from the Commission for Social Care Inspection (CSCI). It was part of a national programme of inspections using agreed standards and criteria. As part of the inspection, they also evaluated the Council's response to the Victoria Climbié Inquiry (VCI), published in January 2003. An area for improvement identified by the inspectors was the arrangements for oversight of intake teams by Lead Members.

2.3 This report details the actions taken by senior managers and Lead Members to implement these recommendations of the Victoria Climbié Inquiry and to respond to the area for development identified by CSCI.

2.4 The Children Act 2004, section 19 requires a childcare authority to appoint a Lead Member for Children's Services to undertake such functions conferred on or exercisable by the authority as the authority consider appropriate. In response to the findings of the CSCI inspection in 2005 arrangements were made for the Lead Member for Children and Families to visit the four duty teams in the County. Between July 2005 and July 2006 13 Monthly visits were completed to the four duty teams

in Eastbourne; Battle; Lewes and the Disability team at Sorrel Drive, Eastbourne. A pro-forma was developed for recording the findings of these visits (see appendix 2) and on all visits the manager was seen along with other members of staff.

2.5 Issues discussed during Lead Member visits included:

- use of computers and electronic social care records;
- the development of the Children Index;
- workloads; and the re-structuring of services.

Issues raised by the Lead Member with senior managers as a result of the visits included:

- training;
- computer access;
- re-structuring of services.

Lead Member's comments on the teams visited included:

- '...a committed team who share professional advice together' ;
- 'I was impressed by the calm atmosphere and business-like approach to everything.' ;
- 'A very tight and well-run team...'

2.6 In addition to the Lead Member's visits to the duty teams the Deputy Director for Children & Families also visits each duty team at approximately six-monthly intervals meeting with staff in order to discuss any concerns they have and to ensure they are fully aware of any service developments.

2.7 Senior managers have been conducting quarterly file audits since 2003. Files are chosen at random from teams ensuring that at least one file from each worker in the team is reviewed. Managers then audit the files against a set of professional standards (Appendix 1 includes the pro-forma for the file audit). Following the CSCI inspection in 2005 the file audits were organised to ensure that one each of the four duty teams was audited each quarter. Findings from the file audits are reported to the Children's Social Care Management team and action plans are developed in response to the development areas identified by the audits.

2.8 Strengths identified within the file audits include:

- compliance with child protection procedures and effective child protection conferences;
- effective inter agency work to safeguard children;
- good working in partnership with parents.

Areas for development include:

- continues to be difficult to evidence views and wishes of children
- concerns about feedback given to referrers and other agencies.
- issues re: geneograms but this may reflect the nature of duty work focussing on initial assessments and short-term interventions.

3. Conclusion

3.1 The monitoring arrangements in place meet the requirements of the Victoria Climbié Inquiry and provide effective mechanisms to ensure that Members and senior managers are informed about the quality of services being offered by their front-line staff, and are able to take appropriate action to remedy deficiencies as they are revealed.

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BACKGROUND DOCUMENTS

The Victoria Climbié Inquiry - Report of an Inquiry by Lord Laming 2003
Keeping Children Safe: The Government's Response to the Victoria Climbié Inquiry Report and Joint Chief Inspectors' Report Safeguarding Children 2003

3. Is recording legible, dated and signed Yes No

Comments:

4. Are outcomes of supervision recorded on the file? Yes No

Comments:

5. Is there evidence of management oversight on the file i.e. has the file been audited PM/OM? (On DAT files has the IAR etc been counter-signed by the PM?) Yes No

Comments:

6. From the assessment is it clear what the family's needs are regarding?

Race Yes No

Language Yes No

Religion/Culture Yes No

Disability Yes No

Are these needs addressed in the care plan? Yes No

Comments:

7. Are the views of the child clearly recorded? Yes No

Comments:

8. Are the views of the parents/carers clearly recorded? Yes No

Comments:

If the child has been the subject of a CP investigation answer Questions 9-11.

9. Was the child protection investigation proceeded by a:

Strategy Discussion

Yes No

Strategy Meeting

Yes No

Comments:

10. Were appropriate agencies consulted?
Was the child seen?

Yes No
Yes No

Comments:

11. Were referrers told of the outcome of the investigation?
Yes

After the investigation was completed was the status of
the child clear?

Yes No

Comments:

If the child's name is on the CPR answer Questions 12-16

12. Is there a Core Assessment/child protection
assessment on file?

Yes No

Was the Assessment completed within timescale?

Yes No

Comments:

13. From your reading of the file did the conference record reflect clearly the critical risks to
the child.

Yes No

Comments:

14. Is there a CP plan using the agreed pro-forma? Yes No
- Does the CP plan safeguard the child? Yes No

Comments:

15. Is there a Core Group? Yes No
- How actively has it met between Reviews? 1 2 3 4 5 or more
- Was this sufficient? Yes No

Comments:

16. Is the child being seen every 10 days by a member of the core group? Yes No
- Is the child being seen every six weeks by the social worker ? Yes No
- Has the social worker had seen the child alone? Yes No

Comments:

Is the child Looked After? If so answer Questions 17 – 19.

17. Are copies of relevant documentation completed and up to date?

LAC Reviews

Yes No

Essential Information

Yes No

Care Plan

Yes No

Permanence Plan

Yes No N/A

PEP

Yes No N/A

Health Assessment

Yes No

Comments:

18. Are Statutory visits taking place

Yes No

Is the child being seen alone?

Yes No

19. Does record of statutory visit cover

Standard of care

Yes No

Child's view of placement

Yes No

Carer's view of placement

Yes No

Health

Yes No

Education/Training/Employment

Yes No

Social presentation/Self-care skills

Yes No

Comments:

20. Any Further Comments?

21 Any Issues to raise with Line Manager?

Signed.....Date.....

Visits by Elected Members to Teams in Children's Services

Date of Visit..... Team Visited.....

Manager(s) seen.....

Staff seen.....

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Work Areas discussed with Manager.....

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Issues Discussed with staff.....

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Members views of the service.....

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Matters to be raised with Senior Managers.....

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Any specific resource shortfalls.....

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Signed.....

Date.....