

LEICESTERSHIRE POLICE AUTHORITY



Meeting **POLICE AUTHORITY MEETING**

Date **5 MAY 2009**

Report of **CHIEF CONSTABLE**

Subject **EVERY CHILD MATTERS**

Purpose of the Report

- 1 This report is submitted as update on issues relating to the 'Every Child Matters' and safeguarding within Leicestershire.

Background

- 2 In 2003 as a response to the Victoria Climbié case The Government published Every Child Matters which together with subsequent supplementary documents forms the Statutory Guidance issued by the DCSF for Safeguarding Children.
- 3 Recent High profile cases have resulted in a further review of Safeguarding by Lord Lamming who has reported back to government with a range of further recommendations to build upon the existing practice and procedure.
- 4 The 58 Lamming recommendations have been accepted by Rt Hon Ed Balls MP, Secretary of State for Children, Schools and Families. Many of these recommendations are now being interpreted and a government response is expected by the end of April 2009.
- 5 Leicestershire Constabulary is a member of the Leicester, Leicestershire and Rutland Local Safeguarding Children Board (LSCB). This board provides the coordination which assists the various agencies responsible for safeguarding children, to work in partnership.

Developments within Leicestershire

- 6 The Police have established my Detective Chief Inspectors post to engage with the LSCB and ensure that we fully contribute to its work. A consistent specialist contribution to the LSCB is beginning to ensure that we professionalise our involvement and ensure that the Police perspective is appropriately recognised within the LSCB business plan.
- 7 The LSCB has established a small group to review its working practices, the current risks and its resilience in the light of Haringey and other resent situations. The urgent reviews conducted by OFSTED and other agencies have provided a

set of learning points and a number of themes have been identified from national learning.

- 8 The Working group has reported back to the main LSCB and noted that it is a well respected board with many areas of best practice in place. However there are a number of opportunities for improvement and the LSCB is currently realigning its committees and practices to accommodate these.
- 9 The principle areas for development include:-
 - a. The Board's subcommittee structure has been reviewed and an amended structure is being implemented.
 - b. The Board's quality assurance information provision is being revitalised to ensure that the nationally recognised best practice it has developed is fully implemented. This is intended to provide regular and intrusive performance indicators which will allow the board and its partners to ensure that their safeguarding arrangements are effective.
 - c. The training provided and coordinated by the Board has been reviewed and a new strategy is being implemented.
 - d. The management of serious case reviews is being tightened up nationally and the LSCB has responded to the increased workload and demanding timescales. A restructured Serious Case Review Subcommittee will begin meeting this month and a consistent methodology for producing serious case reviews is being finalised.
 - e. OFSTED now review all completed reviews and mark them against a developing set of criteria. They have adopted a very ridged marking scheme and examine the quality of the final report rather than the evidence of lessons being learnt. Lord Laming has reemphasised the need to focus on the learning available in each case and it is hoped that the awaited DCSF guidance will achieve this. The current system is time consuming and resource intensive. Considerable effort has to be expended to ensure that the report and its production process can withstand scrutiny.
 - f. The independence of all key roles in the reviewing process has been emphasised by Lord Laming and government. Best practice is still developing but it is likely that the panel chair and the report writer will have to be independent of the safeguarding agencies and will be commissioned on a case by case basis.
 - g. In addition the emerging standards and independence required of each agencies internal management report writers makes this a role requiring sufficient consistency and quality to develop best practice.
 - h. There are a number of legacy serious case reviews which have been delayed by criminal proceedings or other processes. Most have been partially completed under previous requirements and best practice. There is considerable pressure to resolve these and submit them quickly. Although this is still not possible in every case it is likely that a disproportionate number of cases will be published locally and nationally during the next 6 months. This may give a misleading impression about the frequency and seriousness

of these cases. Approximately two years worth of cases (seven) are likely to be published within six months. The heightened media interest in these cases is likely to build upon this situation and presents a risk to the public confidence in the police and our partners.

- i. The LSCB is coordinating the partnership activity to prepare for these releases and to ensure that the lessons learned are implemented. Consistent themes are
 - i. Early interagency information sharing needs to be strengthened to identify and assist the vulnerable.
 - ii. Internal improvements are required in case risk management and intelligence handling.
 - iii. The planned force wide vulnerable persons training programme will help raise the awareness of safeguarding issues.
 - iv. Cases involving mental health and personality disorders are particularly prevalent and require further partnership development to ensure that clear procedures and practices are in place.
- j. The increased media and professional focus on safeguarding children has caused an initial 50% increase in the number of concern referrals recorded by the police. This has remained at an elevated level since the Haringey case. Officers report that the increased caseload is made up of appropriate and genuine cases which we would encourage the public and our partners to refer. Other agencies report a similar increase. Work is being completed to analyse the sources of these referrals and to ensure that the reporting thresholds are appropriately understood.
- k. The Precept funded growth in the Child Abuse Investigation Unit (CAIU) is steadily being implemented. A growth of two detective sergeants and fifteen detective constables was authorised. To date both sergeants and eight constables have been recruited. The increased workload and other demands for staff are hampering progress. However a child abuse serious case team is being launched to help fulfil the objectives set for the growth.
- l. The CAF approach to identifying and responding to the needs of young people is gathering momentum and is on schedule for implementation in similar forms across Leicester, Leicestershire and Rutland.
- m. Information sharing between partners will be promoted by the introduction of ContactPoint latter this year. This national computer database project will help professionals working with a young person identify others who are also engaged with them. The business processes and protocols to make use of this system are being developed by early adopter forces and Leicestershire will join the next phase of implementation. Our councils already have staff working on the data about every child under the age of 18 years, held in the system.
- n. The introduction of the Police national Database by the end of 2009 will also ensure that safeguarding systems can make a step change in improvement. We can become more compliant with the Bichard enquiry recommendations, Currently Leicestershire Constabulary holds records of all the offenders and victims it has encountered however we do not have

access to the information and intelligence held by other forces. We are therefore vulnerable when offenders and victims move between force areas. When risk assessing situations as part of safeguarding procedures it is clearly important to have as complete a picture as possible.

Financial Implications

- 10 Safeguarding children is a growing area of business for Leicestershire constabulary. The current political and media focus shows no signs of abating and is likely to generate further legislation and statutory guidance. To date this has generated more referrals and more complex process requirements to respond to them. This will have resource implications for the force.
- 11 The media focus has created a high risk environment where all safeguarding agencies will face considerable pressure to invest appropriately in their safeguarding services.
- 12 The government response to the Laming recommendations is expected during April and this will be an appropriate point to consider the current resource requirements of the safeguarding agenda.

Recommendations

- 13 Members are asked to note the current developments outlined in this paper.
- 14 Members may wish to consider scheduling a further discussion about these issues and their resource implications when the government have responded to the Laming recommendations.

Background Papers

No supporting Papers are presented.

Person to Contact

D/Chief Inspector Peter Jackson, Crime support and Partnership.
Tel 0116 2222222 ext 5163