

Leicester
City Council

WARDS AFFECTED
All

FORWARD TIMETABLE OF CONSULTATION AND MEETINGS:

Social Services and Personal Health Scrutiny Committee
Cabinet

28 April 2004
14 June 2004

Victoria Climbié Inquiry Report

Report of the Corporate Director of Social Care and Health

1. Purpose of Report

- 1.1. To provide an update on the continuing work to address the areas for improvement within the Social Services Inspectorate's (SSI) evaluation of the City Council's self-audit following the Inquiry Report.
- 1.2. To provide a comparative analysis of the local position to that of other local authorities.

2. Recommendations

- 2.1. Cabinet is recommended endorse decisions (1) and (2) of the Scrutiny Committee on 28 April, and to determine the position in respect of decision (3):-
 - (1) that the action/progress following the completion of the Climbié self audit and the information now available on comparative findings be noted;
 - (2) that the continuing responsibility on all Departments to maintain a clear focus on ensuring that safeguarding children is embedded in policies and accountabilities within all departments of the council be noted; and
 - (3) that Cabinet be recommended in the strongest possible terms that awareness training on child protection be made compulsory to all Members.

3. Summary

- 3.1. **The evaluation:-** The evaluation of the City Council's self-audit judged that this represented a Council in which performance against all the key standards was consistently achieving "serving most children well" or showing "promising capacity for improvement". This represented a more than satisfactory rating. As expected, the same issues were then a major focus of the full Children's Services Inspection in May 03. The Inspection endorsed the self-audit position and the positive evaluation it had received. This contributed to the improvement to two-star rating for the Department's work.

- 3.2. Our self-assessment had been confident that our systems, procedures and practice were soundly based, but more cautious in claiming that our systems for quality assuring practice are as fully developed as we would wish. It reflected ambitious plans to develop systematic quality assurance and also a clear analysis that critical success factors in making headway are those of available staff time and ease of retrieval of information. The evaluation by the Social Services Inspectorate in fact reflected back that our current systems of supervision and monitoring should be seen as strengths on which we intended to build and that the minor changes to practice and procedure self-identified could reasonably be seen as longer term developments rather than matters of concern demanding immediate action.
- 3.3. **The action plan:-** Key areas for development were identified as crucial both to support consistent good practice and to make possible increased focus on quality assurance . These were:
- Full implementation of the new IT database system “Carefirst” as a tool to track and record work
 - Recruitment and retention of staff and related workforce planning
- 3.4. The Social Services Inspectorate evaluation had also highlighted developments within the inter-agency arena as key to successful safeguarding of our children locally. Of particular importance amongst these were:
- securing better arrangements with University Hospitals Leicester for collaborative working on child protection matters, including agreements about discharging children from hospital,
 - Building the capacity of the Area Child Protection Committee to audit the effectiveness of inter-agency work
- 3.5. **Progress on the action plan:-** Detailed commentary on the progress of work under the action plan is set out in the supporting information. Progress on the key areas is as follows:
- The full implementation of the CareFirst database system remains a major project – some management reports are now available and will hopefully support managers to track and monitor work. There is still some way to go before the system frees managers from time-consuming manual data collation. It is anticipated the Care First database will be fully operational across Children’s Services by March 2005.
 - Recruitment and retention issues remain a significant pressure, although concerted attention to workforce planning issues has led to reductions in vacancies in some core areas of the Department. It is hoped the introduction of the Job Evaluation Scheme will help to address the recruitment and retention issues.
 - An inter-agency workshop involving key managers within Police, Social Care and Health, and Health clinicians and managers is planned for early March 2004. This will be wholly focused on agreeing ongoing actions to improve working relationships, practices and arrangements
 - An Area Child Protection Committee Audit officer is now in post and this additional resource is already beginning to galvanise activity around inter-agency auditing in a way which has not been possible previously

- 3.6. The added impetus provided by the direct involvement at Chief Executive level has been influential in enabling positive progress of the inter-agency issues and indeed in making progress on two other key issues recognised as significant in responding to the Climbie report:
- Securing better arrangements for medical examinations and the expectations and standards in relation to these
 - Supporting basic child protection awareness training across a wider range of agencies and staff in statutory and voluntary bodies. It is anticipated this programme of staff awareness training will continue in the future.
- 3.7. Similarly, the early work prior to the audit by the Corporate Director in relation to the Statement of Responsibilities both highlighted the existing strengths in terms of existing lines of accountability and provided a sound basis on which to develop our governance structures. It is planned as part of this process to introduce member awareness training on child protection. Members of the Social Services and Personal Health Scrutiny Committee discussed this matter in some detail at their meeting on 28 April 2004. The Committee expressed particular concerns that the training was not compulsory and strongly recommended that this be the case. The recommendations on this paper have been amended to reflect this.
- 3.8. Although the Climbie Report made no direct recommendations in respect of Local Education Authorities, the Chief Executives meetings have included representation from the LEA. Child protection training within Schools and Lifelong Learning is identified as a particular area for review. The other key issue is that of tracking children who move to ensure that no child goes "missing" when they move school or Authority.
- 3.9. In Leicester, the Education Department has engaged upon a single-agency programme of training for all schools and Lifelong Learning settings. The programme is now in its second year and participants are subject to 'spot-checking' to monitor the effectiveness of the training received. The Department also promotes and supports multi-agency training under the ACPC. In addition, the LEA has also initiated a system of checks to ensure that transfers of children between schools and LEAs are monitored and completed successfully.
- 3.10. **Comparative analysis of the local position to that of other local authorities:** The National Findings of the Social Services Inspectorate are set out as appendix 2. There is no available information on how well all councils are following through on Action Plans which have followed the self-audit and evaluation process.
- 3.11. The challenges facing Leicester City were those commonly found in other councils and there were no areas of weakness in our systems or practice which were unusual:
- Leicester City was amongst the 54% of Councils evaluated as serving children well;
 - All Councils identified areas of further work and Leicester City is amongst many who intended to work to a detailed action plan;
 - Our concerns regarding the capacity to monitor systematically enough and plans to build capacity through IT systems were echoed in many Councils;
 - Similarly, concerns about recruitment are also common.

- 3.12. Nationally, the Social Services Inspectorate identified some specific areas of concern, such as relationships with housing, over reliance on police powers to protect children, lack of information sharing protocols, lack of allocation policies as common areas of concern. Local arrangements in these areas do not raise concern.
- 3.13. Uncertain arrangements for protecting children from abroad was also highlighted as a common area of specific concern. Locally, our Duty and Assessment Service had already done solid work to develop practice in this area. However, since the audit, there has been a 2 hour practice development workshop to all key managers and a regional working group, led by Leicester City practitioners, to develop inter-agency guidance to promote the best practice.
- 3.14. In many instances the Social Services Inspectorate judged that Councils had overrated their current performance – the self-audit submitted by this council accorded with their judgement at the time (and was confirmed within the full Inspection subsequently). Our self-audit has been seen as appropriately self-critical and reflecting ambitious plans to improve. The National findings suggest that Leicester already has the key ingredients which the Social Services Inspectorate considers are features of best performing councils, although the challenges are also significant.

4. **Headline Financial and Legal Implications**

The 2003/04 Departmental Revenue Strategy provided £200,000 for implementing the outcome of the Climbie Inquiry. Service developments are being funded from this and the Children’s Services budget generally, and have also been taken into consideration in the 2004/05 budget recently approved by Council. (Colin Sharpe, Head of Finance – Tel. 252 8800)

There are no direct legal implications arising from this report (Kamal Adatia, Team Leader, Legal Services – Tel, 252 7044).

5. **Other Implications**

OTHER IMPLICATIONS	YES/NO	Paragraph References within Supporting information
Equal Opportunities	Yes	Throughout report
Policy	Yes	Throughout report
Sustainable and Environmental	No	
Crime and Disorder	No	
Human Rights Act	No	
Elderly/People on Low Income	No	

6. **Background Papers – Local Government Act 1972**

Climbie Self Audit and SSI information on comparative findings.

7. Consultations

None on the writing of this report.

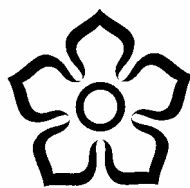
8. Report Authors to contact:

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DECISION STATUS

Key Decision	No
Reason	N/A
Appeared in Forward Plan	No
Executive or Council Decision	Executive (Cabinet)



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SUPPORTING INFORMATION

Appendix 1 DETAILED INFORMATION ON PROGRESS OF THE LOCAL ACTION PLAN

Below is a detailed report of the areas for development which have been the subject of attention:

Standard 1 Referrals:

- Minor revisions to ACPC procedures to comply with the Climbié recommendations were completed quickly. Minor revisions are in hand for some existing proformas and checklists within Social Care and Health.
- The common referral form for children has now been introduced and is beginning to be used across a variety of agencies.
- Awareness of child protection within non “childcare” Departments has risen - issues have been raised by other departments including at senior managers forum. Several Departments have sought specific consultation on their own contact with children.
- The newly appointed Audit Officer for the Area Child Protection Committee is undertaking a piece of work focusing on referrals from other agencies. A basic child protection awareness training programme has been running to all agencies

Standard 2 Assessment:

- The focus on developing analytical skills continues through training courses, and in addition there are practitioner workshops set up for June and November 2004.
- Steps to address identified difficulties in joint working with UHL have been extensive and has built on the collaboration between agencies which took place when each agency was completing its respective audit. There has been detailed ongoing work within Health to secure better arrangements for medical examinations within child protection cases. A full day workshop is now arranged for 9th March 2004, involving nominated key managers and practitioners within University Hospitals Leicester, the

Police and the Social Services Departments to review and improve practice. Gaining movement in these areas has taken time, and the added impetus provided by the involvement at Chief Executive level has been influential in this.

Standard 3 Allocation service provision and closure

- Work is ongoing to promote the use of chronologies – and this is now interwoven with work required to meet the demands of the judicial case management protocol.
- Work has been undertaken to create more synergy between Child Protection plans and core groups – with focus on timescales and outcomes required - to help engage parents more
- Briefing sessions material has been devised to be used in regular sessions with social workers promoting preparation of parents for conferences to promote engagement.
- Recruitment and retention continues to be a major focus on attention.

Standard 4 Guidance

- Leicester City has led a regional working group which has produced guidance on safeguarding children from abroad.
- The Child Protection accountabilities paper has been the impetus for discussion and review of accountability/responsibilities.

Standard 5 Training and development

- An ACPC Working group on working with hostile/ violent families is now in draft form. It has been led by Leicester City staff and will be informing an in-house training event planned in this year's work.
- The UHL workshop planned in March 04 will include a focus on challenging other professionals, as this is a key issue in working with medical staff.
- Induction processes have been strengthened in relation to child protection.

Standard 6 Organisation and management

- Recruitment of independent chairs has proved difficult and it has not yet been possible to free team managers to spend more time on direct staff management, and specific case monitoring. However, a pilot has started of team managers in DAS undertaking monitoring of other team's cases.
- File monitoring has also been supplemented by some specific themed monitoring of child protection cases, making more focused use of the CPIRS monitoring which already takes place.

Standard 7 Governance

- Workforce planning is now built into future business plans and should promote examination of skill mix needs as commended by the SSI.
- There have now been three Chief Executives' meetings on safeguarding children. These have both strengthened the capacity of the Area Child protection Committee to promote key improvements in inter-agency working and have continued to demonstrate commitment from the top.
- The Children's Home Visiting Panel is to be extended to include safeguarding issues.

Appendix 2: LETTER FROM SOCIAL SERVICES INSPECTORATE AND FINDINGS



Social Services Inspectorate

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9 October 2003

Dear Director

AUDIT OF VICTORIA CLIMBIE INQUIRY RECOMMENDATIONS

Following the publication of the Victoria Climbié Inquiry (VCI) report, the Secretary of State for Health sent a checklist of the report's good practice; recommendations to all local councils with social services responsibilities.'? Denise Platt, the Chief Inspector, subsequently wrote to Chief Executives requiring them to complete an audit of their council's professional practice, management and governance arrangements by 30 April 2003. Councils were asked to confirm that they were satisfied that appropriate arrangements were in place to ensure the quality of services to children in need, particularly those in need of protection. This letter provides information about the findings of the audit and how we are taking this work forward.

All councils completed the VCI audit by the due date. SSI evaluated them, using the large amount of evidence that we hold on the performance of councils to form judgements as to how well councils were serving children and their prospects for improvement as part of our ongoing performance discussions. We are now considering with all councils how they are addressing the areas for development identified through the self-audit. We are undertaking more detailed work in some councils through our planned inspections of children's services or follow-up visits. The VCI audit judgements will also contribute to the star rating judgements for social care to be announced in November.

Findings for Social Services

We have collated all the evaluated self-audits to product a national picture. Headline comments have already appeared in the Chief Inspector's annual report, *Modern Social Services - a Commitment to the Future*, which was published in August 2003. A summary of the findings is attached at Annex 1. It provides a basis for you to compare your performance with that of other councils.

The areas that were most commonly identified as requiring further action from the evaluation of the self-audits were:

- developing or reviewing policies, -procedures and guidance to staff;
- systems to monitor and review the implementation of procedures and guidance;
- arrangements to ensure that front line workers, supervisors and managers comply with policies and procedures;
- improved management information;
- improved communication and/or protocols between social services and other agencies.

SSI is also preparing a report on children's services based on all the evidence that we have collected in the last year from the audit, inspections and performance assessment.

Inter-agency findings

The practice of health bodies and police forces was also audited by the Commission for Health Improvement and Her Majesty's Inspectorate of Constabulary. The three Inspectorates have produced a summary report of the key inter-agency findings. This is also attached. Copies of the report will be sent to Area Child Protection Committee chairs with a letter from the Chief Inspectors of SSI, HMI Constabulary and the Commission for Health Improvement. We will encourage them to use it to stimulate discussion with their members about how practice can be improved on a multi-agency basis in localities.

Yours sincerely

cc Chief Executive

EVALUATION OF SELF-AUDITS BY COUNCILS FOLLOWING THE VICTORIA CLIMBIE INQUIRY

INTRODUCTION AND SUMMARY OF FINDINGS

The audit

- 1.1 Following the publication of the Inquiry into the death of Victoria Climbié, chaired by Lord Laming, Alan Milburn, the then Secretary of State for Health, asked councils with social services responsibilities and relevant health bodies to review their performance against the practice recommendations in the report. The Home Secretary also asked police forces to review their services against the relevant recommendations.
- 1.2 The Social Services Inspectorate (SSI) produced an audit tool for councils to use. This structured Lord Laming's recommendations into a set of standards and criteria which were closely related to those used by SSI in inspections of children's services and child protection services.
- 1.3 Councils were asked to assess their position against each standard and criterion, and to describe how they were monitoring their performance.
- 1.4 All 150 councils completed the self-audit electronically by the deadline of 30 April 2003. They have taken the exercise very seriously, often carrying out detailed audits of their practice and involving staff at all levels. This has in itself been a significant learning opportunity for councillors, senior staff and front line workers, challenging them to ask themselves how effective their services are in meeting the best interests of children. Many have, as a result of the audit, produced action plans for further improvement, often linking this with their partner agencies in their Area Child Protection Committee (ACPC).

Evaluation

- 1.5 The SSI link inspector for each council evaluated the audit, taking into account information about the council which was already known as a result of inspections and performance assessment. The evaluations were moderated regionally and nationally. All councils received feedback on their audit on 20 June. This included detailed comment on areas of strength and areas for development. This has been discussed with councils in their annual review meeting. It will be followed up by SSI through inspections and performance monitoring as appropriate.
- 1.6 Inspectors made two judgements on each council: How well are children being served? and What is the Council's capacity to improve?

1.7 The evaluation of the audit will also be used to inform SSI's overall judgement about children's services that will contribute to the social care star ratings to be published in November 2003.

How well are councils performing?

- 1.7 More than half of councils were judged by SSI as "serving children well" or "serving most children well", with excellent or promising capacity for improvement. A further quarter were judged as "serving some children well" and having "promising capacity for improvement"
- 1.9 In the overall star ratings for 2001-2002, 99 councils (66%) were judged as not serving children well or serving some children well. In the audit, 67 councils (45%) were in these categories.
- 1.10 Councils were asked to assess their performance against the following:
- referral
 - assessment
allocation, service delivery & closure
 - guidance
 - training & development
 - organisation & development
 - governance
- 1.11 Approximately three-quarters of all councils judged themselves as very effective or satisfactory against each standard. More councils (27%) were concerned about Governance than any other standard.
- 1.12. In many instances councils identified through the audit that they had policies and procedures in place but lacked systems to monitor their implementation in a systematic way and identify areas for [improvement. IT](#) systems were increasingly being used to address this.
- 1.13. Some councils considered that their capacity to improve was uncertain because of organisational changes, the very large agenda suggested by the audit and recruitment problems.
- 1.14 SSI made a judgement about each council's performance against each of the standards. SSI's evaluation tended to suggest that they did not think that councils were performing as well as they thought they were.

Compliance with timescales

- 1.15 Lord Laming set out timescales for council's to implement the Inquiry's recommendations. Councils said that that over 80% of criteria under standards 1-3 would be met by the end of April 2003 with the vast majority of the remainder being met by the end of July. Standards 4-7 were less likely to be in place by the end of July. This was particularly true of Training and Development and Governance arrangements.
- 1.16 No council judged that it was meeting all criteria to the timescales suggested by Lord Laming's recommendations. In many instances councils did have procedures in place but their audits suggested that they needed to tighten up on some areas of practice. Others needed to review their procedures and to introduce more systematic monitoring.

ACTION FOR IMPROVEMENT

- 2.1 The self-audit has helped councils to identify where:
- they need to develop or review their policies, procedures and guidance to staff;
 - systems are needed to monitor and review the implementation of procedures and guidance;
 - compliance with policies and procedures is inconsistent by front line workers, supervisors and managers at various levels;
 - management information is limited and/or inadequately reported;
 - there are areas of poor communication and/or protocols with other agencies.
- 2.2 The best performing councils had clear policies and procedures in place and systems for ensuring that they were put into practice, through effective supervision and management and audit of various kinds, together with systems for looking at the quality of the work done. While there are examples of good practice in relation to each of the criteria and standards, all councils identified areas for further work and many made it clear that they intended to produce a detailed action plan following the audit.
- 2.3 There were a number of areas for particular attention in many councils. These are:
- improved **management information systems**,
 - **systematic reporting** to senior managers and councillors to facilitate policy development and performance assessment and improvement;
 - monitoring the effectiveness and recording of **managerial decision making** throughout the process from referral to closure;
 - continued work on **use of the assessment framework** on a multiagency basis;
 - increased clarity about **the purpose of assessments and interventions**;
 - decisions about **emergency action** are made at an appropriate level and backed by appropriate and timely professional and legal advice. In a number of council areas there

may be an over reliance on the use of police protection powers, which may not always be in the best interests of children;

- assessment of the **housing** needs of children and families and improved service liaison to meet them wherever possible;
- **more robust decision making about children in need;**
- safe and appropriate **case transfer** within and between councils;
- arrangements for protecting children who have moved into the council area from **overseas;**
- clear understanding by all agencies of **what information can be shared** under what circumstances;
- systematic and consistent **recording practice;**
- **allocation** policies and practice;
- **the use of staff who are not qualified social workers** e.g. family centre staff and social work assistants working with children in need.

Conclusion

- 2.4 The audit of councils following the Victoria Climbié Inquiry report has revealed that a majority of councils are serving all or most of children and young people well with promising or excellent capacity for improvement. Although much remains to be done councils are working hard to address shortcomings in practice and systems. SSI will continue to work closely with poorer performing councils in order to support improvement.