

REPORT TO: Executive Board

DATE: 2 April 09

REPORTING OFFICER: Strategic Director, Children & Young People

SUBJECT: Review of Safeguarding Children and Young People in Halton

1.0 PURPOSE OF REPORT

- 1.1 To outline the findings of the Joint Area Review of Haringey Council and their statutory partners.
- 1.2 To set out an analysis of current strengths in Safeguarding and Child Protection Services in Halton.
- 1.3 To identify service trends in Safeguarding and Child Protection Services in Halton along with a Development Plan.

2.0 RECOMMENDATIONS: That Executive Board

(1) endorses the 'Development Plan' enclosed as Section '4' of this report.

3.0 SUPPORTING INFORMATION - BACKGROUND

- 3.1 The significant weaknesses identified by the recent Joint Area Review (JAR) of Haringey Council and its statutory partners services to vulnerable children has caused a wave of both political and public concern about the protection of Children in our Society. It has also had a significant impact on those who deliver Safeguarding services.
- 3.2 The Haringey JAR in November 2008 judged the Borough as "inadequate"; and gave a damning verdict of the management and application of Child Protection Services across much of the public sector.
- 3.3 Lead Statutory responsibility for Child Protection Services rests with the Director of Children's Services and the Lead Member for Children and Young People. In Haringey both lost their jobs; and the Council, its reputation. Most importantly a child lost its life.
- 3.4 Halton Council and its partners were judged in April 2008 by the OFSTED Joint Area Review as 'Outstanding' in its Safeguarding and Child Protection Practice. That 'Outstanding' judgement was confirmed in the Annual Performance Assessment by Ofsted Published on the 17/12/08 of the Council's Children and

Young People's Directorate. This is one of only a few 'Outstanding' ratings nationally.

3.5 As a Four Star Council and outstanding Children's Services Authority, our immediate response to events such as those of baby 'P' is always to be reflective and challenging of our current practice. This was how the 'Outstanding' Judgement was achieved and the only way it can be maintained. Halton's goal is always to seek to improve practice. This report summarises the result of that 'reflective' process.

3.6 **HARINGEY**

3.6.1 In summary, Haringey's JAR had the following principal findings:

3.6.2 Failure to identify children at immediate risk and act on evidence

3.6.3 Social Workers, Health professionals and Police did not communicate well

3.6.4 Poor gathering, recording and sharing of information

3.6.5 Inconsistent frontline practice and supervision by senior management

3.6.6 Insufficient management oversight by the Assistant Director of Children's Services by the Director of Children's Services and Chief Executive

3.6.7 Over-dependence on performance data which was not always accurate

3.6.8 Poor Child Protection Plans

3.6.9 Failure to ensure all requirements of the inquiry into Victoria Climbiés murder in 2000 were met

3.6.10 Failure to speak directly to children at risk.

3.6.11 An inadequate Serious Case Review into Baby P's death

3.6.12 High turnover of Social Workers resulting in heavy reliance on agency staff

3.6.13 Heavy workloads and case allocation for Social Workers, with true numbers of children allocated to them not always accurately counted.

3.7 **HALTON'S STRENGTHS:**

3.7.1 The Review of Halton's Safeguarding and Child Protection Services found the following:

3.7.2 Systems and processes are compliant with Lord Laming's recommendations following his Climbié Report in 2004.

- 3.7.3 Comprehensive and rigorously applied Halton Safeguarding Children Board multi-agency policies and procedures with regard to protecting safeguarding children and young people.
- 3.7.4 Performance was judged as 'outstanding' by an on site OFSTED inspection following a rigorous analysis of front line services including the Social Care Duty system. 'Safeguarding is everybody's business in Halton' (Ofsted July 2008)
- 3.7.5 There is clear evidence of strong partnership working across agencies; with robust challenge and scrutiny. This has been central to attaining the 'Outstanding' judgement.
- 3.7.6 The Halton Safeguarding Children's Board was externally validated as providing clear leadership on Safeguarding.
- 3.7.7 Halton has an open culture where Managers, including the Strategic Director and Operational Director for Specialist Services are close to front line delivery.
- 3.7.8 Direct involvement of the Chief Executive and Lead Member in the work of the Halton Safeguarding Children Board through regular reporting.
- 3.7.9 Comprehensive and extensive multi-agency quality auditing of frontline practice.
- 3.7.10 Excellent performance data systems
- 3.7.11 Performance on all critical Safeguarding and Child Protection indicators rated as excellent.
- 3.7.12 Strong political leadership and support in ensuring that the safeguarding of children is one of the Council's highest priorities. This is also reflected in partner agencies governance arrangements.
- 3.7.13 An excellent calibre of staff, committed to high standards
- 3.7.14 Relatively low levels of staff turnover in Social Care in comparison with many other Council areas.

3.8 HALTON'S CONTEXT AND CHALLENGE:

- 3.8.1 There are, however, significant challenges that need to be addressed if Halton is to maintain its Outstanding rating for Safeguarding and improve outcomes for children in need.
- 3.8.2 Halton has a high prevalence, in some communities, of deep seated familial problems that drive demand for safeguarding and particularly child protection interventions.
- 3.8.3 There are challenging levels of compromised parenting*, often inter-generational. This is where 'poor' parenting can become a threat to the safety and well being of children. Sometimes this is life threatening.

- 3.8.4 Compromised parenting is most apparent in the levels of reported domestic violence, substance misuse, adult criminality, and mental health problems. There is a higher prevalence of these factors in vulnerable and unsupported families.
- 3.8.5 Child Protection Plans will often be in response to one or more of these factors; often all are apparent.
- 3.8.6 Low rates of breastfeeding, high rates of obesity and poor dental hygiene can be indicators of low level parenting skills. High rates of childhood mental ill health, alcohol misuse, teenage parenting and pregnancy and of young people not engaged in Education Employment or Training can in some cases be linked to poor parenting capacity.
- 3.8.7 The result of such 'compromised' parenting is increasing demand for social work support and assessment services. This is increasing year on year.
- 3.8.8 In 2006 there were 1000 assessments of such circumstances. The projection for year end April 2009 is that this figure will rise to 1400. In the same period the number of allocated social work cases has risen from 640 to 780. This increase is partly as a result of better identification of need, and more effective interventions. However, as a result of this Halton has a higher rate of children with a Social Worker than many other Council areas.
- 3.8.9 During the period 2006 to 2008, the number of Children in Care has slightly declined from 152 to 148. However during the same period there has been a significant increase in the cost of foster care and residential care caused by an increasing reliance on, and cost of, Independent Sector providers. The Out of Borough placement budget is projected to overspend.
- 3.8.10 A full analysis of the demand for and supply of fostering and residential care has been completed and has identified a number of significant trends that need to be addressed.
- 3.8.11 The reduction in the supply of local foster cares is as a result of retirements, deregistration, higher national standards and competition from the Independent Sector.
- 3.8.12 The increase in demand for foster care is the result of an increase in the number of babies and younger children coming into Care and an increase in the length of time children stay in Care and in the same placement.
- *Compromised parenting refers to inadequate or dangerous parenting with limited scope for substantive improvement
- 3.8.13 The increase in cost of foster care and residential care is as a result of charging policies by the Independent Sector and significant regional and national supply issues that make this a providers market.

- 3.8.14 There are some infrastructure issues within the Council that impact on the capacity of child protection services, particularly social work deployment, that needs to be addressed.
- 3.8.15 This first is the implementation of Electronic Social Care Records (ESCR) and the Integrated Children's System (ICS). These will result in a total dependency on ICT systems for the recording of social care interventions and care plans. Implementing these systems is complex in that they require a fundamental review of business processes, the implementation of new software and data collection systems and the retraining of the workforce. ICS is a nationally prescribed system but there is no national procurement programme or central data system. Halton is on track for implementing these systems and is considered an exemplar of good practice.
- 3.8.16 Secondly, the difficulties in recruiting social workers and social care managers have highlighted issues with regard to some Human Resource processes. The Council will need to reflect on how it can better respond to market conditions in terms of Social Worker and Manager recruitment.

4.0 DEVELOPMENT PLAN

- 4.1 In order to maintain its 'Outstanding' performance, the Council will need to implement a 'Development Plan'. This is the Council's Development Plan.
- 4.2 The following actions are recommended on the basis of an analysis of the strengths and areas for development in local Safeguarding arrangements, and in anticipation of Governmental requirements, which are being strengthened.
- 4.2.1 The establishment of a Safeguarding Unit hosted by the Children and Young People's Directorate. This will integrate lead officers for Safeguarding in Halton from Social Care, the NHS, Education and potentially the Police; co-located into a united Safeguarding Unit. A separate report will outline this proposal for consideration at the Halton Safeguarding Children Board. This is a realignment of multi-agency resources and not an additional cost.
- 4.2.2 To address supply issues in the fostering service it will be necessary to recruit up to an additional 30 foster carers over the next 2 years. In the first instance this will require measures to ensure that the fostering team is fully staffed. A number of attempts over the last 2 years to recruit a Principal Manager for Fostering have failed and it has been impossible to recruit to Fostering Officer posts. In order to address this, it will be necessary to restructure the service to make these positions more attractive and competitive. This will be actioned immediately.
- 4.2.3 The recruitment of foster carers is problematic and will require a fundamental rethink about the package of support and remuneration offered. Independent Sector providers are able to offer sufficient remuneration to make fostering a career choice. The cost of this is already met by the Council in the fees it pays for each placement. If the Council were to match these fees it would require considerable additional investment. In the longer term this investment would significantly reduce the demand on the Out of Borough budget. It would also make

a contribution to creating local employment. This will be the subject of a full review during 2009 with proposals emerging in October 2009 for consideration as part of the 2010/11 budget.

- 4.2.4 In order to bring down the number of cases allocated to individual social workers there will need to be an increase in capacity. Based on an average of 16 children per Social Worker, this is calculated as equating to 6 FTE Social Workers. It is proposed to re-designate 3 FTE current posts in social care for this purpose, with a proposal to increase the establishment by the addition of 3 further posts. There are currently seven social work vacancies covered by agency staff. The first priority will be to recruit to these vacancies. The Council will need to consider how it can make these posts as attractive as possible to potential applicants.
- 4.2.5 To meet the requirements of the Children's Work Force Development Council and to address local retention issues it will be necessary to establish a position of Professional Development Manager for Children's Services Social Workers. This will be done through the re-designation of a current Social Care post, and at no further cost.
- 4.2.6 Such an increase in social work capacity is bound to lead to increased pressures on the Legal team. This team provides legal advice in respect of Children and Adult Social Services and Education. There is already a need for greater capacity in the group as it seeks to enhance the services that it provides, and it is therefore proposed to recommend that a new solicitor post is established, given the increased demands.
- 4.2.7 In the longer term the Council, through its Children's Trust, needs to develop different structures to support children in need and their families. This will be Locality based, and take the form of multi-disciplinary teams serving children and families in a local area, working closely with local schools.
- 4.2.8 This proposal will require the refocusing over time of a range of Council and statutory Partners Services; it will also impact on Neighbourhood Management, YOT, Youth Service, and Children's Centres. In the longer term this will be based on the co-location of services, where appropriate, in multi-disciplinary teams. Whilst the multi-disciplinary teams will focus upon targeted case work with families coming together under the banner of Halton's Children's Trust, it will also focus upon the wrap around of services for the family, and the broader community. A separate paper and proposals for a pilot Locality model will be available in April 2009. If such an approach to tackling the underlying causes of poor and compromised parenting outlined earlier in this report is to succeed, it will require the support of the whole Council and Local Strategic Partnership.
- 4.2.9 Such a 'preventative' approach to supporting families in need at a local level will support the wider community and reduce number of children requiring more specialist services.
- 4.2.10 The DCSF have recently announced an invitation to bid for support from a 'Cross Government Co-Location Fund' for capital projects that will enable the co-location of two or more services for children, young people and families. These can be

either small new projects or combined with projects already planned. Projects need to be in place by 2011; with bids submitted by 6th April 2009.

5.0 FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

- 5.1 This report is both challenging and optimistic in terms of Halton Council's ability to respond to the Safeguarding and Child Protection needs of its children and young people. Detailed work is already in hand to address the immediate challenges of ensuring that all children and young people in the Safeguarding and Child Protection system and all children in need in the Borough are properly safeguarded. However, it is clear that the capacity of the fostering system and social work establishment needs strengthening.
- 5.2 The net additional cost of creating an additional 6 FTE Social Work position is £120k in 2009/10. This is for 3 posts; the other 3 Social Work posts will be developed from the current staffing establishment and at no extra cost. In addition, the cost of creating a new solicitor post would be approximately £49,000 plus car allowance in 2009/10.
- 5.3 The pressure on the Out of Borough budget and over-spend of £900k is being dealt with by changes to a number of budget lines and efficiencies. Some £600k re-adjustments have been made to address the over-spend. This leaves a net additional cost of £300k in 2009/10.
- 5.4 It is proposed that part of the Council's contingency should be set aside to cover those initial costs for 2009/10; and reviewed thereafter.
- 5.5 The 'Locality' model for the future delivery of services (not including clearly identified Child Protection cases) will be self-financing by using current resources differently. This will be the subject of a separate report for a pilot in April 2009. A bid will be made to the DCSF for capital from the Cross Government Co-Location Fund by the 6.4.09.
- 5.6 The additional costs associated with the recruitment of an additional 20 to 30 foster carers will be the subject of a separate report in October 2009 for consideration in the 2010/11 budget setting process. This is currently not reflected within the Efficiency Programme.

6.0 IMPLICATIONS FOR THE COUNCIL'S PRIORITIES

6.1 Children and Young People in Halton

The Safeguarding of children and young people is fundamental to improving their outcomes in all aspects of their lives.

6.2 Employment, Learning and Skills in Halton

Effective safeguarding is required ensure children, young people and their families are able to succeed in learning and achievement.

6.3 A Healthy Halton

Effective safeguarding will improve the general health and well being of children and young people as well as tackling health inequalities such as obesity, drug and alcohol dependency and mental ill health.

6.4 A Safer Halton

Effective safeguarding will improve safety in communities by reducing parental criminality, anti-social behaviour as well as reduce the risk of abuse and neglect in children.

6.5 Halton's Urban Renewal

7.0 RISK ANALYSIS

The safeguarding of children and young people is critical to the well being of all citizens in the Borough and to the effectiveness of the Council. Failure to adequately safeguard children and young people will severely impact on the Councils performance and reputation.

The key control measure to mitigate these risks are set out in the Development Plan in Section 4 of this report.

8.0 EQUALITY AND DIVERSITY ISSUES

These proposals will result in greater equality and opportunity for vulnerable groups in the Borough.

9.0 REASON(S) FOR DECISION

To ensure that children and young people are effectively safeguarded and the Council is compliant with the requirement set out in Lord Lamings Review of Progress Report.

10.0 ALTERNATIVE OPTIONS CONSIDERED AND REJECTED

10.1 None applicable

11.0 IMPLEMENTATION DATE

2nd April 2009

10.1 LIST OF BACKGROUND PAPERS UNDER SECTION 100D OF THE LOCAL GOVERNMENT ACT 1972

Document	Place of Inspection	Contact Officer
Every Child Matters “Change for Children”	Municipal Buildings	Paul Boyce
Climbié Review	Municipal Buildings	Paul Boyce
Lord Laming Progress Report	Municipal Buildings	Paul Boyce
Ofsted Joint Area Review: Haringey	Municipal Buildings	Paul Boyce
Ofsted Joint Area Review: Halton	Municipal Buildings	Paul Boyce

11.0 CONCLUSION:

- 10.1 Safeguarding children well requires the Council to routinely evaluate the effectiveness, capacity and safety of the current system. This report brings together the full range of issues impacting on the Council in its principal objective of keeping children safe.