
Meeting: Children, Families and Learning Overview and Scrutiny Committee

Date: 10 November 2009

Subject: Central Bedfordshire Council Response to the recommendations arising from the Laming Report

Report of: Cllr A Lewis Portfolio Holder for Children Families and Learning

Summary: The Report advises the Overview and Scrutiny Committee of the actions being taken by the Council in response to Lord Laming's Report March 2009 following the death of baby Peter.

Contact Officer: Martin Pratt Assistant Director Children's Specialist Services and Deputy Director Children Families and Learning.

Public/Exempt Public

Wards Affected: All

Function of: Executive/Council

CORPORATE IMPLICATIONS

Council Priorities:

Implementation of the Laming action plan relates directly to two of the Council's priorities:

- Educating, Protecting and providing opportunities for children & young people.
- Creating safer communities.

Financial:

The proposed actions are planned to be delivered within existing resources which may require some re-prioritisation.

Legal:

The plan supports the Council in discharging its duty to Safeguard and promote the Welfare of Children & Young People.

"Working Together to Safeguard Children 2006" is statutory guidance and therefore the Council has a duty to comply. The 2009 revision is due to be published in December.

Risk Management:

Implementation of the Action Plan is intended to reduce the risk of failure of the child protection system. Such a failure would result not only in harm to children but reputational, financial and regulatory risk to the Council and its partners. The actions agreed in the Plan mitigate those risks.

Staffing (including Trades Unions):

Not applicable.

Equalities/Human Rights:

Equalities implications of the child protection process are addressed through procedures and assessment processes and in so doing the Council will be meeting Articles 2, 3, 5, and 8 of the European Convention on Human Rights.

The plan is for all children irrespective of age, disability, ethnicity, gender, religion or sexual orientation. Equality Impact Assessments are undertaken for the service areas delivering on the content of this plan.

Community Safety:

An effective safeguarding system is essential to ensure the safety of children and young people within our community.

Sustainability:

Not applicable.

RECOMMENDATION:

that the Overview & Scrutiny Committee note progress to date in responding to Lord Laming's recommendations and endorses the Central Bedfordshire Action Plan.

National Context

1. Following the enquiry into the death of Baby Peter in 2008, Lord Laming produced a report containing a number of recommendations for action in order to improve Child Protection in England. In their response to the Laming report, published on 6 May 2009, HM Government accepted all of the recommendations. Central Bedfordshire Council are committed to ensuring that the recommendations are fully implemented and therefore requested an immediate review of the recommendations and clarification of the action required of the authority. This took place in May 2009.
2. The attached document (Appendix A) sets out the recommendations which have relevance for the Council, the action required in order for the Council to be compliant, and progress to date in responding to those actions.

Recommendations of Lord Laming

3. Lord Laming's report grouped his recommendations into 7 key themes.
 - (a) Leadership and accountability which relates to all levels of leadership from Ministers to local leadership across services, supported by effective performance management systems?

- (b) Support for children
which includes front line practice, early intervention, referral systems and thresholds for support?
 - (c) Interagency working
looking at co-ordination between adult and children's services, the Common Assessment Framework (CAF) and information sharing.
 - (d) Children's workforce
with particular emphasis on remodelling the children's social care work force, addressing recruitment, retention, training, and morale issues.
 - (e) Improvement and Challenge
in particular through new inspection arrangements including a revised inspection regime for schools, serious case reviews and the establishment of the new National Safeguarding Unit.
 - (f) Organisation and Finance
particularly in relation to Local Safeguarding Children Boards (LSCBs) and recommendations relating to protection of budgets for safeguarding.
- Legal considerations
- (g) relating to the understanding and application of legal processes by the children's workforce including action to reduce delays in court proceedings.

The report makes 58 recommendations in all.

Central Bedfordshire's response to the Laming Report

4. The Children Families and Learning directorate has worked with internal and external partners to produce a detailed action plan in response to Lord Laming's recommendations. The attached action plan (Appendix A) sets out those actions which are being undertaken to ensure that local safeguarding practice and multi-agency working is effective and produces improved outcomes for children, young people and their families.
5. The Action Plan is being monitored internally through the Children Families and Learning Management Team. The Central Bedfordshire Management Team is to receive a progress report on 4 November 2009.
6. In addition the Children's Trust and the Local Safeguarding Children Board (LSCB) are monitoring implementation of the partnership actions.
7. Many of the recommendations relate to action to be taken by central government. The Action Plan ensures that Central Bedfordshire is ready to implement any new requirements and respond to revised guidance as it is published.

Conclusions and Next Steps

8. Central Bedfordshire Council has responded in a timely way to the recommendations made by Lord Laming and has in place a detailed action plan describing how it is acting, with its partners, to implement those recommendations. It also identifies how local safeguarding performance is monitored through the Council's management teams and through appropriate multi agency partnerships.

Appendices:

Appendix A – Laming Recommendations 2009; Response and Action Plan; Children Families and Learning June 2009 and progress as of 1 October 2009.

Background Papers:

The Protection of Children in England: A Progress Report – Lord Laming March 2009

The Protection of Children in England; Action Plan – The Government Response to Lord Laming – May 2009

Location of papers: Priory House, Chicksands