

Brighton & Hove City Council

For general release

Meeting: Children Families and Schools Sub Committee
Date: Monday 9 June 2003
Report of: Director of Children Families and Schools
Subject: SSI Child Protection Inspection & Climbié Action Plan
Wards affected: All

1. Purpose of the Report

1.1. To advise members of the response to the Social Services Inspectorate (SSI) Child Protection Inspection and the audit of child protection services following receipt of the 'Victoria Climbié Inquiry' report.

2. Recommendations

2.1 To note the contents of the report and endorse the Action Plan.

3. Information – SSI Inspection

3.1 The SSI inspection of child protection social work services was carried out between 28th October and 20th November 2002. The inspection evaluated social work child protection services, focussing particularly on whether children were effectively safeguarded.

3.2 The services were inspected against a set of standards and criteria for child protection. The inspection involved examination of case files, individual and joint interviews with staff, services users and managers, as well as sending out postal questionnaires and reading background reports.

3.3 The main findings of the inspection were that: -

- a) The quality of practice was variable but there was evidence of high quality and effective practice as well as some cases where children were inadequately safeguarded.
- b) The SSI were impressed by the quality and commitment of the front line staff but felt that they were under considerable pressure and operated high thresholds.
- c) There was a good range of family support services but they were not sufficiently focussed on the most vulnerable children. Steps had been taken to address this issue but the necessary changes had not been implemented at the time of the inspection.

- d) Senior managers and members commitment to services for children was encouraging, and the Area Child Protection Committee (ACPC) was seen to be an effective organisation.
 - e) There were concerns about the shortages of social workers in frontline services but it was acknowledged that improvements had resulted from the recruitment and retention strategy and that in the context of high cost housing and national shortages progress was being made.
 - f) There were concerns about the budget particularly in the context of the corporate financial difficulties. There was a budget strategy in place and there had been some success in reducing overspends.
- 3.4 The SSI inspection of child protection services followed from the Joint Review of all social care services by the Audit Commission and SSI which had recommended changes in the delivery of services that were underway at the time of the inspection. Such changes usually lead to a drop in performance and the SSI acknowledged that despite this within Brighton & Hove performance had been maintained.
- 3.5 The overall judgement on the performance matrix was 'That services overall were serving some people well but that the prospects for improvement were uncertain'.
- 3.6 The recommendations can be grouped into five main areas for action: -
- a) Ensuring that all children to be adequately safeguarded;
 - b) Developing family support services integrated with assessment functions;
 - c) Improving audit and review of practice and ensuring that children's views are heard;
 - d) Ensuring that services are adequately funded and that resources are used in the best way to ensure that children are safe;
 - e) Improving recruitment and retention of staff.
- 3.7 An action plan for responding to these recommendations has been developed and there are already strategic plans in place: -
- a) Work is underway on implementing the family support strategy which will incorporate a single assessment framework across all agencies;
 - b) A comprehensive performance management and quality assurance process has been agreed;
 - c) A workforce strategy is being developed and considerable efforts are being put into resolving the department's financial difficulties.
- 4. Information – Climbié Inquiry Report**
- 4.1 On 25th February 2000 Victoria Adjo Climbié died as a result of months of ill treatment by her two carers, her great-aunt Marie-Therese Kouao

and her aunt's boyfriend Carl John Manning. On 12th January 2001 they were convicted of Victoria's murder and sentenced to life imprisonment.

- 4.2 On 20th April 2001 Lord Laming was appointed to conduct an inquiry into the circumstances leading to Victoria's death including the functioning of the police, health and social services and to make recommendations to the government as to how such an event could be avoided in the future.
- 4.3 The Inquiry examined professional practice in three London boroughs, two hospital trusts, two police child protection teams and an NSPCC family centre. Practice in all agencies was criticised and Victoria's death was described as '... a gross failure of the system...' Services were described as '... under-funded, inadequately staffed and poorly led.'
- 4.4 The inquiry although critical of individual practice of frontline staff was more critical of managers and senior members of the local authorities for their ignorance of the state of practice within their services. Effective leadership and management are critical to effective safeguarding of children.
- 4.5 There are 108 recommendations in the report, 17 of which are general, 46 are specific to social care services, 26 refer to health care services and 17 relate to police services. On receipt of the report the Department of Health advised all Local Authorities to immediately implement over half the recommendations as they were in accord with current legislation. They also required Local Authorities to complete an audit of services identifying shortfalls in current service provision for completion by 30/4/03.
- 4.6 It is intended that all other recommendations will be included in the Green Paper on Vulnerable Children and Children at Risk due for publication in June 2003. These include recommendations for significant changes in the management and organisation of child protection services including the possible creation of a National Agency for Children and Families.

5 Action Plan

- 5.1 The response to both the Climbié audit and the SSI Inspection must be viewed within the context of other changes and developments already in progress that will influence and affect the action plan. Two very significant influences are the establishment of The Children's Trust and the development of integrated assessments and family support services in response to the Best Value Review of Children's Services. Aspects of the action plan may therefore be adjusted in response to changes required by these developments.
- 5.2 It was previously agreed with the SSI that the action plan in response to the SSI inspection should incorporate those actions required following

the 'Climbié Audit'. There are significant similarities between some of the areas for development identified in the SSI Inspection of local services and the recommendations in the Climbié Report. Implementation of the SSI recommendations will move the service nearer to meeting the standards required by the Climbié Inquiry.

- 5.3 Specific areas of coincidence are monitoring and review of casework, pressures on frontline services, quality of assessments and integration of family support services with child protection assessments. It is important to recognise that the development of the local Family Support strategy needs to be taken forward in conjunction with recommendations concerning front line services arising from the Climbié Inquiry.
- 5.4 An action plan has therefore been drawn up to respond to both the SSI Inspection and the Climbié recommendations and is attached as Appendix 1. A number of issues for action may arise or be identified following the publication of the Committee Green Paper on Children at Risk, which is expected in June 2003. The local action plan may therefore need to be revised or added to at that point.

6. Financial Implications

- 6.1 The SSI Inspection report raised some significant concerns about the quality of child protection services. In order to meet the requirements of the Climbié report the SSI Inspection recommendations must be implemented and sufficient resources made available to enable this to happen.
- 6.2 Although the current budget is set above the Standard Spending Assessment (SSA) there are particular problems in Brighton & Hove that have led to significant over-spends. These are associated with the high cost of living in the area that makes recruitment of both social workers and carers particularly difficult.
- 6.3 It is probable that meeting the requirements of the Climbié Inquiry Report will cause budget pressures in 2003/4. It is intended that these pressures will be absorbed within base budgets however there may be areas where this is not possible.
- 6.4 Specific areas likely to cause problems are implementing the family support strategy and ensuring that assessments and chronologies are recorded appropriately on all case files. Ensuring adequate oversight of case work by Practice Managers may also be difficult if recruitment of experienced social workers continues to be difficult, The specific detail of these additional costs is not yet available but work is ongoing to estimate likely budget pressures.

7 Consultation

- 7.1 The SSI Inspection involved direct consultation with staff, service-users, union representatives, members as well as managers at all levels in the organisation. The action plan was developed after consultation with staff and managers.

Contact Officer:

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Financial implications

It is probable that meeting the requirements of the Climbié Inquiry Report will cause budget pressures in 2003/4. It is intended that these pressures will be absorbed within base budgets, work is currently underway to estimate the probable budget pressures.

Finance Officer consulted: Louise Hoten

Legal implications

The Department is required to meet statutory obligations under the Children Act 1989, the Adoption Act 1976, the Carers (Recognition Services Act) 1995, the Carers and Disabled Children Act 2000 and associated regulations and the Children (Leaving Care) Act. Human rights implications under the Human Rights Act 1998 arise in connection with the provision of statutory services to children and families in need. Most notably the following Articles are relevant. Article 2 (Right to life); Art. 3 (Prohibition of torture or inhuman or degrading treatment or punishment); Art. 5 (Right to liberty and security of person); Art. 6 (Right to a fair hearing); Art. 8 (Respect for private and family life, home or correspondence); and Art.14 (The enjoyment of the rights and freedoms set forth in the convention shall be secured without discrimination). *Lawyer consulted: Natasha Watson*

Corporate/City-wide implications

The SSI inspection and the Climbié audit examined the professional practice of the social work teams within Children, Families & Schools. This report will be an element of the performance rating for social services which in turn is an important element of the Council's overall rating under the Comprehensive Performance Assessment (CPA). The Local Authority also has a corporate responsibility for ensuring that children within Brighton & Hove are safeguarded, a key part of this is effective, functioning, social work services.

Risk assessment

Any risks associated with the proposals have been identified and addressed within the main body of the report.

Sustainability implications

There are no specific sustainability issues.

Equalities implications

Children who have been abused are significantly disadvantaged. Abuse affects their capacity to participate effectively in all aspects of ordinary life. Effective child protection work is essential for social inclusion of all

	children.
Implications for the prevention of crime and disorder The Youth Offending Team is responsible for work around crime and disorder for young people. This team also has child protection responsibilities that must be integrated with core child protection services. There was some concern from the inspectors that the YOT has become, marginalised from these services	
Background papers 1. Action Plan attached as appendix 1 2. Inspection of Child Protection Services – Brighton and Hove City Council' 3. The Victoria Climbié Inquiry – Report of an Inquiry by Lord Laming 4. Audit of services of Children in need in response to the practical recommendations of the Victoria Climbié Inquiry – Brighton & Hove City Council	
Contact Officer Fiona Johnson Head of Child Protection x 5384	

SSI Child Protection Inspection and Climbié Action Plan				
1. National Priorities & Strategic Objectives				
Relevant Report Recommendations	Action Planned	Timeframe	Outcome Measure	Responsible Person
Climbié 7.8 SSI - 2.1	1.1 To embed changes within the services that are already underway by the establishment of The Children's trust and the development of the integrated assessment and family support services. 1.2 To establish a Children and Families Committee to ensure governance arrangements for The Children's trust. 1.3 Establishment of a monthly Child Welfare Board where Children Families & Schools (CFS) DMT will report to members on the work of social care staff including the implementation of the Joint review, Best Value, SSI and Climbié Action Plans.	From September 2003	1.1 Children's Trust established 1.2 Children and families Committee established 1.3 Board in place with regular reports	Director of CFS and Joint Commissioner AD Children's Social Care, AD Community & Families & Head of Child Protection
2. Effectiveness of Service Delivery and Outcomes for Service Users				
Relevant Report Recommendations	Action Planned	Timeframe	Outcome Measure	Responsible Person
Climbié 1.2	2.1 Establishment of integrated family		Family support teams in place	

SSI 2.2; 2.3; 2.4; 2.19; 2.25	support service across the city that is working to achieve the following: a) More rapid assessments of need; b) Lower thresholds for access to services c) Reducing the number of child protection referrals.	Services in place by 1/4/04	across four areas working in an integrated manner with the Duty & Assessment Team (DAT) and other children's social care teams	AD Community & Families
Climbié 1.7	2.2 All staff to be reminded via memo and amended operational instructions that referrals to outside agencies are made by the key worker in consultation with their line-manager.	June 2003	Memo sent and operational Instructions amended	Head of Child Protection
Climbié 2.11 SSI 2.5 and SSI 2.6	2.3 Improve communication with children and their carers by: - a) Developing a good practice guide for staff about communicating with children b) Review staff training needs regarding communicating with children c) Implement 'Total Respect' training programme d) Review and re-launch the Independent Visitors Scheme	May 2003 onwards	a) Good practice guide in place b) Training needs evaluated c) Training in place d) Increased use of IV scheme by social workers and Looked After Children (LAC)	Head of Child Protection and Children's Right Officer Training
Climbié 2.3 SSI 2.7	2.4 Improve assessments by: - a) Amending the initial assessment template to incorporate the referral form and to speed up recording of assessments b) Ensure that all assessment templates are recorded directly on to carefirst	May 2003 Spring 2004	a) New template in place and all assessments recorded on it b) All assessments recorded directly on Carefirst	Head of Assessment Head of Assessment & Carefirst Team

Climbié 2.9 SSI 2.8	2.5 Improve assessments by: - a) Undertaking a review of the quality of assessments and the decisions derived from them. b) Implementing any necessary changes in practice required by the audit	July 2003 July 2003 onwards	Review completed and changes implemented	Head of Child Protection
3. Quality of Services				
Relevant Report Recommendations	Action Planned	Timeframe	Outcome Measure	Responsible Person
Climbié 4.1 SSI 2.9 and 2.10	3.1 Improve child protection advice to outside agencies by: - a) Improving and developing LEA advice to schools. b) Writing guidance re roles and responsibilities of Independent Reviewing Officers. c) Adopting standards for the work of the Independent Reviewing Officers and Auditing their work.	July 2003	a) Improved advice to schools b) Guidance written c) Standards in place and work audited against the standards	Head of Child Protection & AD Quality Standards & Leadership
Climbié 1.4 SSI 2.11	3.2 a) All child protection training organised by the ACPC training Sub-group to include reminders to all agencies to follow -up referrals in writing. b) ACPC Audit & Review Group to establish audit systems that check whether referrals	July 2003 onwards	Reminder included in training, audit systems in place	Head of Child Protection

	are being followed-up in writing.			
Climbié 1.5 SSI 2.13	3.3 Heads of Service to randomly check Section 47 referrals to ensure that minimum standards are met.	April 2003 onwards	Checks are undertaken by Heads of Service	Heads of Service
Climbié 1.6 SSI 2.11	3.4 A joint audit of joint/single agency investigations to be undertaken by Police & CFS to check that the single/joint agency protocol is effective and is being followed	September 2003	Audit completed	Head of Child Protection
Climbié 2.13 SSI 2.12	3.5 Improve the quality of out of hours services by: - a) Ensuring that the Emergency Duty Service (EDS) review currently underway considers provision of 'out of hours legal advice' and visits to children's homes to facilitate hospital discharge of children at weekends and evenings. b) Amend current contract with East Sussex County Council to ensure out of hours legal advice is available to EDS staff.	April 2003 onwards April 2003	EDS review completed Contract amended	AD Children's Social Care AD Children's Social Care
Climbié 2.2 SSI 2.14; 2.23	3.6 Improve the quality of planning, review and decision-making by: - a) All Practice Managers using the supervision checklist and ensuring that supervision decisions are Specific Measurable Achievable Realistic Targets (SMART)	April 2003 onwards	Audits of case records show that the quality of supervision has improved and has lead to improved planning and decision-making	AD Children's Social Care, Head of Child Protection and all Heads of

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> b) Case file audit systems to be put in place in all areas of service – Heads of service to be responsible for developing audit systems and audit tools, Service Managers to undertake the audits c) The work of the Reviewing Officer Team to be audited d) All managers to regularly review supervision decisions and records 			Service
Climbié 2.4; 3.10; 3.1 SSI 2.15	<p>3.7 Improve the quality of recording of social work interventions by: -</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a) Re-issuing the pro-formas for strategy discussions, boarding out visits and 10-day monitoring b) Develop a chronology pro-forma c) Up-dating operational instructions to remind staff to complete chronologies and to contingency plan where the child is not seen d) Auditing case files re use of pro-formas and chronologies 	April 2003	Pro-formas being used and chronologies completed as evidenced by case file audits	AD Children's Social Care & Head of Child Protection
Climbié 2.1; 3.3; 3.9	<p>3.8 Improve management oversight of work transfer by:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a) Heads of Service randomly auditing decisions regarding work allocation b) Heads of Service setting up systems to check that case transfer meetings are taking place within time-scales 	April 2003 onwards	Work transfer processes are being regularly reviewed by Heads of Service	AD Children's Social Care, and all Heads of Service

	<p>c) Developing Carefirst codes for DAT & Disability to distinguish between team-worked and unallocated work</p> <p>d) Establish systems to report delays in allocation & transfer of work to AD Children's Social Care</p>			
Climbié 2.6;	<p>3.9 Improve access to services by : -</p> <p>a) Setting up systems to records the use of interpreters</p> <p>b) Amend operational instructions to ensure that reasons are recorded when interpreters are not used</p>	April 2003 onwards	Use of interpreters being centrally monitored	Heads of Service
Climbié 2.7	3.10 Develop Carefirst to provide data re time-scales for strategy meetings and decisions made within 24 hours.	Spring 2004	Performance data provided from carefirst	Carefirst Team
Climbié 2.8	<p>3.11</p> <p>a) Develop a protocol and procedure regarding reporting shortcomings in accommodation to the Director of Housing</p> <p>b) Develop a system to monitor such referrals</p>	July 2003	Protocol in place and referrals being monitored	Head of Assessment
SSI 2.16	<p>3.12 Improve the effectiveness of core groups by: -</p> <p>a) Developing pro-forma for care plans</p> <p>b) Providing Inter-agency training re joint</p>	April 2003 onwards	Pro-forma in use and core groups and child protection	Head of Child Protection

	working in core groups c) ACPC Audit & Review group auditing the quality of child protection plans		plans more effective as evidenced by the audit	
Climbié 3.7; 3.8	3.13 Improve monitoring of casework by: - a) Amending operational instructions to require staff to formally transfer all work when families move out of the area. b) Remind staff of the requirement to share written information with receiving authorities when families move.	July 2003	Operational instructions amended	Head of Child Protection
4. Fair Access				
Relevant Report Recommendations	Action Planned	Timeframe	Outcome Measure	Responsible Person
Climbié 1.1 SSI 2.10	4.1 Improve access to services by: - a) Auditing training needs of reception and other frontline staff across the City b) Providing training for reception and other frontline staff across the City c) Developing a referral checklist for reception and other frontline staff across the city	From April 2003 – March 2004	All staff appropriately trained with access to relevant checklist	Head of Child Protection in conjunction with relevant service managers
SSI 2.17	4.2 Ensure that Disability Services do not become marginalised by: - a) Widening the range of children	July 2003	Links with mainstream	Head of

	supported by the service using Quality Protects resources to increase staffing b) Further integrate social care services with Health and Education services	onwards	services are strengthened and services are more integrated	Disability
SSI 2.18	4.3 Maximise effective use of adult services by:- a) Improving links with Adult Social Care b) Working with designated nurses and doctors to improve links with health professionals	April 2003 onwards	Increased access to specialist adult services by children and families in need	AD Children's Social Care & Head of Child Protection with ACPC
SSI 2.19	4.4 Improving access to case records and complaints representation by:- a) Reminding all staff to provide service-users with leaflets re access to records and complaints b) Including within assessment and review pro-formas recording regarding service-user knowledge of complaints and access to records	April 2003 onwards	Increased take-up of these services	AD Children's Social Care & Head of Child Protection
Climbié 3.6	4.5 Review Hospital Social Work involvement in planning and review meetings in conjunction with relevant health staff	July 2003	Review completed	Head of Assessment
5. Cost and Efficiency				
Relevant Report Recommendations	Action Planned	Timeframe	Outcome Measure	Responsible Person
SSI 2.21	5.1 To increase the supply of local quality	September	Reduction in the number of	AD Children's

	placements for children with complex needs by implementing the Best Value Action Plan	2002 onwards	children placed more than 20 miles away from Brighton & Hove	Social Care
SSI 2.22	5.2 To improve understanding of the unit costs of all services by using the 2003 Child In Need (CIN) census information to define unit costs of all services. This data to be used by the Commissioner to determine cost effectiveness when reviewing services	June 2003 onwards	Greater understanding of the relative costs and effectiveness of different parts of the service	Head of Child Protection & the Children's Commissioner
6. Management and Resources				
Relevant Report Recommendations	Action Planned	Timeframe	Outcome Measure	Responsible Person
Climbié 3.5 SSI 2.27	6.1 Improve induction of new staff by a) Establishing minimum standards of experience and training for new staff undertaking child protection work b) Establish child protection induction programme c) Monitor qualifications and experience of staff doing child protection work	June 2003 onwards	Improved retention of staff in high pressure areas such as DAT	Head of Child Protection
Climbié 5.1	6.2 To continue to work to reduce vacancies by implementing the recruitment and retention strategy	September 2002 onwards	Fewer vacancies in high pressure parts of the service and reduction in turnover of staff	AD Children's Social Care
Climbié 5.2	6.3 To improve the quality of the social work provided to children and families by implementing the council-wide appraisal	September 2003 onwards	Appraisal scheme in operation	AD Children's Social Care & Head of Child

	scheme			Protection
Climbié 6.2	6.4 a) All staff to be reminded about cover arrangements for leave and sickness b) Audit cover arrangements	June 2003 onwards	Staff reminded audit undertaken	AD Children's Social Care & Head of Child Protection
Climbié 6.3 SSI 2.23	6.5 Scrutiny of casework and audit of case files to be improved by: - a) Senior Managers ensuring that Practice Managers scrutinise case files as part of management and supervision b) Senior Managers ensuring that Service Managers have in place effective case-file audit systems c) The QA Team to undertake an audit of supervision records to check that operational practice has improved	June 2003 onwards	Practice Managers scrutinising case files, Service Managers auditing files leading to improvements in social work practice	AD Children's Social Care with relevant Heads of Service
Climbié 6.4	6.6 Establish systems with Human Resource Staff to monitor level and time-spans of temporary appointments	June 2003 onwards	Managers reviewing all temporary appointments on a regular basis	AD Children's Social Care
Climbié 6.5 SSI 2.24	6.7 To strengthen the capacity of CFS to independently review work by: - a) Establishing a virtual Quality Assurance Team involving Reviewing Officers, Development Officers and other	July 2003 onwards	QA Team in place; Audit programme agreed and audits underway	Head of Child Protection

	<p>Operational Managers</p> <p>b) Agree a three-year audit programme prioritising those areas identified in the Climbié audit and SSI inspection</p> <p>c) Implement audit programme</p>			
Climbié 7.4	<p>6.8</p> <p>a) As part of the induction programme provide councillors with full induction into child protection systems and quality assurance and performance management processes</p> <p>b) To develop a checklist of key responsibilities for members, officers and staff regarding children’s social care responsibilities including child protection and looked after children</p>	July 2003 onwards	Induction seminars provided	Head of Child Protection
SSI 2.28	<p>6.9 Ensure that threats of violence to staff do not adversely affect decision making by:</p> <p>-</p> <p>a) Reviewing current policy and procedures with other ACPC partners</p> <p>b) Provide all managers and staff with team-based training re coping with violence and aggression</p>	April 2003 onwards	All staff and managers trained with team policies and procedures in place	Head of Child Protection and Training section

Item no. 5 on agenda

Fiona Johnson, Head of Child Protection

14/5/03