

DUNDEE CITY COUNCIL

REPORT TO: POLICY AND RESOURCES COMMITTEE - 23RD FEBRUARY 2009

REPORT ON: CHILD PROTECTION AND THE FINDINGS OF THE JOINT AREA REVIEW OF HARINGEY CHILDREN'S SERVICES AUTHORITY AREA

REPORT BY: CHIEF EXECUTIVE

REPORT NO: 94-2009

1.0 PURPOSE OF REPORT

1.1 To inform members of the Policy and Resources Committee of the Children and Young Person's Protection Committee response and the steps that have been taken to address the findings of the Joint Area Review of Haringey Children's Services Authority Area and the recommendations from the Significant Case Review, into the case of 'Baby P'.

2.0 RECOMMENDATIONS

It is recommended that the Policy and Resources Committee:

- 2.1 Note the content of this report;
- 2.2 Request the Children and Young Person's Protection Committee to implement the updating of child protection procedures and action plans.
- 2.3 Instruct the Chief Executive to provide further reports following the HMle Inspection of Child Protection Services.

3.0 FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

3.1 None.

4.0 MAIN TEXT

- 4.1 Dundee's multi-agency child protection guidelines and procedures promote a consistent understanding of the roles and responsibilities of all staff to protect children and young people. It is important that guidance designed to maintain the safety of all children and young people is periodically reviewed to ensure that it reflects and guides current practice. Experience has shown that, when systems designed to protect children and young people fail, that failure can have tragic and even fatal consequences. It is therefore incumbent on all local authorities and partner agencies to take account of the outcome of significant case reviews and update their procedures accordingly. The most recent being, the Joint Area Review of Haringey Children's Services Authority Area published following the inquiry into the death of 'Baby P'. It is noted that a number of recommendations within the Haringey findings are already embedded within our own policies and procedures. Appendix 1 provides some examples of the recommendations contained in the Haringey's Executive Summary of the serious case review and the Dundee response.
- 4.2 Following the publication of the Joint Area Review of Haringey Children's Services Authority Area into the death of 'Baby P', Dundee's Children and Young Person's Protection Committee took responsibility for considering the findings from this review and the steps to be taken to address these findings.

4.3 Representatives from each agency that make up the Dundee Children and Young People's Protection Committee examined the findings and respond to each recommendation. Each agency also commented on their assessment of Dundee's current position in relation to the findings of the Joint Area Review;

The steps that have been taken or planned to be taken prior to the Haringey's findings included:

- Reviewing local practice, policy and procedures in respect of child protection;
- Taking account of findings from other inquiries and other child protection inspections to inform practice and procedures and incorporated these findings into an Integrated Child Protection Action Plan;
- The outcomes of all child protection inspections are considered by the Children and Young Person's Protection Committee to inform agency practice;
- The undertaking of two multi-agency self evaluations, in 2003 and in November 2008, (planned in September 08). The outcomes of the first evaluation informed practice, policies and procedures. The second evaluation is to be presented to the Children and Young Person's Protection Committee;
- Developing child protection reporting pathways taking account of a continuum of need for children and young people;
- Developing a multi agency initial assessment and referral tool;
- Previous and current case file auditing;
- Delivery of multi agency child protection training and development

The steps still to be taken in relation to the Haringey findings include the need to;

- Consider enhancing and strengthening partnership governance arrangements given the increasing complexity of the work involved in the care and protection of children and young people and its multi-agency nature. Report 19-2009, addresses governance and sets out plans to enhance and strengthen governance arrangements in relation to the multi-agency management of child protection in Dundee;
- Update the multi-agency procedures, this will take account of any findings, if not already identified, from the HMle Inspection of Child Protection Services;
- Improve the effectiveness of performance management and evidencing how we are performing against standards and practice;
- Ensure that the CYPPC and its member agencies pay sufficient attention to evaluating the quality of front-line practice and quantifying the impact of services on children and young people;
- Ensure that the CYPPC critically evaluates qualitative audit activity to assess outcomes for children and young people by undertaking a multi agency child protection self evaluation;
- Continue to conduct ongoing self evaluation and case file auditing;

4.4 Previous to the publication 'It's everyone's job to make sure I'm alright', Report of the Child Protection Audit and Review Scottish Office (Scottish Executive 2002), which made 17 recommendations, Dundee City Council had and will continue to address the need to improve services to children and young people who are in need of care and protection. For example in 2001 an external audit of child protection was undertaken (report no 399-2001). There have also been a number of committee reports that have included the national and

local review of Child Protection (Report no 164- 2003), response to recent child protection review and inquiry reports (Report no 762 - 2003) and more recently, standards for child protection and amended CP procedures (Report 705-2006) and proposals for improve systems and processes for the protection of Dundee's Children (Report 289-2007)

- 4.5 The revised guidelines and procedures and the underpinning programme of staff training will promote and maintain a high level of awareness amongst staff. They will also provide clear guidance for staff who do have concerns; thereby increasing the capacity of Council departments, working with their partners, to intervene successfully and keep Dundee's children and young people safe.

5.0 POLICY IMPLICATIONS

- 5.1 This Report has been screened for any policy implications in respect of Sustainability, Strategic Environmental Assessment, Anti-Poverty, Equality Impact Assessment and Risk Management.

There are no major issues.

6.0 CONSULTATIONS

- 6.1 The Chief Executive, Depute Chief Executive (Support Services), Depute Chief Executive (Finance) and Head of Finance were consulted in preparation of this report.

7.0 BACKGROUND PAPERS

None.

**Dundee Children & Young Persons Protection Committee
Local Consideration of Recommendations made in the Executive Summary of a
Serious Case Review carried out by Haringey Local Safeguarding Children Board and
published in November 2008.**

MULTI-AGENCY

Recommendation 4.2.1

Haringey's Local Safeguarding Children Board should initiate a multi-agency review of joint protocols and practice guidance for referrals, strategy discussions, core group meetings and child protection conferences in respect of:

- The need to clearly state concerns and professional opinions in referrals
- Multi-agency involvement and attendance in discussions, meetings and conferences
- Involvement of paediatricians and/or named or designated doctors at strategy discussions / meetings (of particular importance if there are different perceptions of the risk and a potential need for further independent comment)
- The use of second, and if required, further strategy discussions
- Ensuring the designated or named paediatrician is invited to a child protection conference if a referral for a paediatric assessment has been made / is being considered
- Administration (to include timing, accuracy, circulation of records and secure maintenance of such circulated records)
- Periodic multi-agency audit of administrative processes
- Ensuring that core group members are informed within five days of any change in an agency's allocated worker

Dundee response

Multi-agency guidance does state that all referrals should be confirmed in writing within 48 hours. The guidance is not specific about the need to state concerns and professional opinions.

Multi-agency guidance is clear about professionals prioritising attendance at Initial Referral Discussions (IRD's). Guidance on Child Protection Case Conferences (CPCC) and Core Groups does refer to multi-agency nature of these gatherings and gives an indication of the range of agencies that might be involved. Reference made to anyone who is unable to attend having to submit a written report. Guidance also refers to transfer case conferences and need for attendance by core professionals from Dundee at any out-of-area conference.

Guidance specifically refers to involvement of health personnel in IRDs. Section on who is likely to be required at a case conference refers to 'examining physicians' and to 'other medical staff with specific, or particular, information'.

Context of recommendation re use of second, or more, strategy discussions not clear from Executive Summary. Dundee multi-agency guidance refers to process of IRDs, CPCCs, Core Groups, Review CPCCs.

However, see recommendation 4.3.26. This may relate to complex CP Inquiries and the need to be able to re-convene planning fora during the course of the inquiry. Multi-agency guidance does not specifically refer to this matter of convening a second, or more, strategy discussions.

As noted above guidance is clear about the need for a paediatrician to be invited to a case conference

Multi-agency guidance spells out the administrative processes pertaining to child protection processes. The CYPPC should invite the relevant Administrative Assistant responsible for the child protection administration from social work department to review the process and report.

Section 8.2. Multi-agency guidance does not specifically state that a change of core group membership needs to be advised to all within 5 days. This should be inserted at time of next review of guidance.

Recommendation 4.2.2

Single and multi-agency training programmes for those undertaking supervision in safeguarding work should emphasise the need for all staff to:

- Be constantly vigilant
- Have an open and inquisitive approach, regardless of any assumptions arising from previous assessments
- Be aware of the need to re-assess following new and cumulative incidents and changes of circumstances (such assessment to include checking the accuracy of basic information e.g. household composition)
- Challenge colleagues within partner agencies if required

Dundee Response

Dundee CYPPC provides multi agency child protection courses for mixed staff groups that include those with responsibility for supervising safeguarding/child protection work. The content of two courses within our core programme reinforces the points covered in recommendation 4.2.2. as being key to ensuring that children/young people are protected from harm and abuse.

Reported Single Agency provision has indicated that there is a mixed picture at present as some agencies are further ahead than others with regard to the points in 4.2.2. However those who were able to respond, [included key universal agencies] confirmed that these points are either currently a component or work is being undertaken to update currently course content to ensure they are covered.

Recommendation 4.2.5

Following the completion of court proceedings and identification of any additional lessons Haringey's Local Safeguarding Children Board should ensure these are disseminated by holding multi-agency briefing sessions for staff.

Dundee Response

Dundee takes a multi-faceted approach to the need to disseminate new information to staff. Briefing sessions might be one way of doing this. Other, arguably, more effective and sustainable ways of achieving this are by incorporating the new information into practice is via the updating or procedures and/or the adjustment or development of staff development programmes and/or the inclusion of information in Newsletters.

EDUCATION

Recommendation 4.3.29

CYPS should circulate to all relevant schools and centres the requirement that all child protection related documents must be transferred to a child's new school or setting within five working days of it being identified.

Dundee Response

Education Department met on Friday, 19 December 2008 to incorporate the Haringey Recommendations into its Child Protection Guidelines.

LEGAL SERVICES

Recommendation 4.3.30 - 4.3.37

4.3.30 Legal Services and Haringey's Children & Young People's Service should review cases involving a legal planning meeting every six weeks at 'legal casework meetings.

4.3.31 All staff in Legal should be reminded of the need to comply with case management and performance standards at all times including accurate recording, filing and adherence to agreed timescales.

4.3.32 The Legal Services office manual should be amended to clarify that related matter checks should include both specific case files and general advice files.

4.3.33 To facilitate effective monitoring, Legal Services should introduce a specific file category for legal planning meetings on its case management system.

4.3.34 A pro-forma legal planning meeting memo and guidance should be drafted for use by the lawyers.

4.3.35 Legal planning meeting memos should be sent within two working days of the meeting and copied to the lawyer's line manager, senior lawyers, social work team manager and senior team manager.

4.3.36 Legal planning meeting advice given by recently recruited lawyers (temporary and permanent) should be checked and approved by the senior lawyer during the first three months of conducting legal planning meetings after joining the team.

4.3.37 Pending a strategic review, Legal Services should ensure that sufficient numbers of lawyers with strong experience of acting for a local authority in childcare proceedings are recruited or alternative methods of service provision are explored.

Dundee Response

The paragraphs relating to Legal Services refer to English provisions, and the procedures in Haringey Council's Legal Services Department, and so the recommendations are not of direct relevance. In Dundee we do not have "Legal Planning Meetings" in child protection cases. Lawyers generally do not attend "Case Conferences", but are available to attend in appropriate cases. Child Protection matters are given immediate attention and the solicitors in the Legal Team dealing with Social Work, have knowledge and experience in child protection issues.