

## **A REPORT ON HEREFORDSHIRE'S "AUDIT OF SERVICES" FOLLOWING THE VICTORIA CLIMBIE INQUIRY (THE LAMING REPORT)**

**Report By: Head of Social Care (Children)**

### **Wards Affected**

County-wide

### **Purpose**

1. To bring to the Committee's attention the Social Services Inspectorate's (SSI) evaluation of Herefordshire's "audit of services" to children in need in response to the practical recommendations of the Victoria Climbié Inquiry".

### **Financial Implications**

2. None.

### **Background**

3. A Briefing paper on the Victoria Climbié Inquiry conducted by Lord Laming was submitted to this Committee on 13th March 2003. The Inquiry contained 108 Recommendations resulting from the tragic death, in February 2000, of eight-year-old Victoria Climbié.
4. Forty-six of the Recommendations were aimed specifically at Social Services. The range of areas covered included training, case management protocols with other authorities, how cases are transferred, hospital based social work and child protection and the auditing of cases.

### **Response to the Inquiry**

5. The Government made its response to Laming on the 8th September 2003. This was principally in the document "Keeping Children Safe ". On the same day the Green Paper (Consultation), "Every child Matters" was published and contains recommendations which link to "Keeping Children Safe". The implications of both documents for Herefordshire will need to be considered separately and reported to a future Committee. The consultative period for the Green Paper is until 1st December 2003.
6. Each Social Services Authority completed a framework entitled "Audit of Services to Children in Need in Response to the Practice Recommendations of the Victoria Climbié Inquiry". Herefordshire submitted its Audit on 30th April 2003 following consultation with the Leader of the Council and Senior Officers. A copy of the submission is available to Members on request.

### **The Audit Framework**

7. The Audit Framework covered the Laming Recommendations by requesting responses around the following seven standards:
  1. Referral

---

Further information on the subject of this report is available from Henry Lewis, Head of Social Care (Children) on (01432) 261603

2. Assessment
3. Allocation, Service Provision and closure
4. Guidance (policies and procedures)
5. Training and Development
6. Organisation and Management
7. Governance (accountabilities of Chief Executive and Councillors)
8. The self-audit was scrutinised by the SSI. It was clear that, if necessary, there would be a follow-up visit or inspection of an Authority. This was not so in Herefordshire's case.
9. A letter was written to the Chief Executive by the Director of SSI, West Midlands, John Cypher, (Appendix 1), which accompanied the Performance Evaluation document for Herefordshire Council.
10. The evaluation of current services was positive stating that **"Herefordshire is serving most children well, and its capacity for improvement is promising"**.
11. This was confirmed at the SSI's Annual Review Meeting of Herefordshire's Social Services performance on 15<sup>th</sup> July 2003. This meeting was attended by both the Cabinet Member (Social Care and Strategic Housing), Councillor Mrs O. Barnett, and the Chair of this Committee, Councillor Mrs M. D Lloyd-Hayes, as well as the Leader of the Council, Councillor Mr R Phillips. Following the meeting the Performance Review Report 2003 letter agreed that "overall the Council's work to improve child protection services, .....had shown significant improvements. These improvements have been sustained through 2002/03 and confirmed through the Joint Review and Climbie Audit".
12. The Audit has dated targets within three months, six months and two years. A future report to Committee will bring together an update on progress on the Climbie audit and any additions prompted by the Green Paper.

## RECOMMENDATION

- THAT (a) the evaluation of the Council's audit of Lord Laming's Inquiry recommendations be noted;**
- and**
- (b) the Director of Social Services and Strategic Housing update the Committee on the audit at a future meeting, including any additional requirements reflected in the Green Paper, "Children at Risk".**

## BACKGROUND PAPERS

- Agenda item 11 Social Care and Strategic Housing Scrutiny Committee, 13th March 2003
- CM 5730, The Victoria Climbie Inquiry, HMSO, February 2003
- The Victoria Climbie Inquiry, Summary and Recommendations HMSO, 2003
- "Children at Risk" - Green Paper (published 8th September, 2003).