

London Borough of Brent
Executive Committee - 13th October 2003
Report from the Director of Social Services

**Report Title: - Inter-Agency Inspection of Child Protection Services
London Borough of Brent May 2003**

For Action

Name of Wards Affected

ALL

1.0 SUMMARY

- 1.1 In May 2003, Brent Children's Services, the Brent Police Child Protection Team and Brent PCT and Hospital trust were inspected by the Social Services Inspectorate, the Commission for Health Improvement and Her Majesty's Inspectorate of Constabulary. This inspection was 1 of 4 carried out in the 4 local authorities that had contact with Victoria Climbié.
- 1.2 This report presents the Inter-agency Inspection Report (Appendix 1) and the Social Services Action Plan (Appendix 2) in response to the recommendations for Social Services. Brent Primary Care Trust and Brent Police Child Protection Team are also required to respond to the recommendations. All the action plans will be need to be agreed and monitored by Brent Area Child Protection Committee.

2.0 RECOMMENDATIONS

- 2.1 The Executive accept the report and note the improvements made and agrees the areas for development set out in the action plan.

3.0 FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

- 3.1 The Social Services Department has considered the resource implications in implementing the inspection findings and has put forward a growth bid in respect of staffing, systems improvements and recruitment initiatives.
- 3.2 If a proportion of this bid is not agreed then the plans and other budgets would need to be reviewed so expenditure will match available resources.

4.0 LEGAL IMPLICATIONS

- 4.1 No legal implications.

5.0 STAFFING IMPLICATIONS

- 5.1 The Social Services department implemented improvements to team manager capacity immediately. However further resource issues will need to be addressed in the Referral and Assessment and Children in Need teams in order to fully implement all the inspection recommendations. These are included in a growth bid for the next 3 years.

6.0 DETAIL

- 6.1 In March 2003, the then Secretary of State for Health, Alan Milburn responded to the Laming Inquiry into the death of Victoria Climbié. The Secretary of State wanted to be assured that improvements had been made to the child protection systems in the 4 local authorities where there had been contact with Victoria Climbié.
- 6.2 Brent, Ealing, Enfield and Haringey were to be inspected by 3 inspectorates - the Social Services Inspectorate, the Commission for Health Improvement and Her Majesty's Inspectorate of Constabulary. Brent's inspection took place between 14-23 May 2003.
- 6.3 In addition every Local Authority PCT and Police Authority in England had to complete a self-audit against each of the Laming Inquiry recommendations for their respective agency. For Social Services, the Social Services Inspectorate evaluated Brent's self-audit as serving some children well with promising prospects.
- 6.4 The inter-agency inspection examined the work of Brent Council Children's Services Department, Brent Police Child Protection Team, Brent Primary Care Trust (PCT) and Central Middlesex Hospital.
- 6.5 The overall assessment of the inter-agency inspection is that "child protection services are continuing to improve. There is a clear focus on protecting children and a commitment to improving services, within each agency and on an inter-agency basis."

In addition the report adds that "Social Services have laid the foundations for an effective service to be built on. In particular there have been big improvements in supervision of staff with a consequent favourable impact on staff morale.

- 6.6 However, the inspection report also found that there continued to be considerable variations in the quality of work delivered by individual social workers. The report also highlights the wide range of management responsibility in the referral and assessment teams in particular. This issue was dealt with immediately following the initial inspection feedback in May 2003 and 2 additional team managers have been recruited. The inspection recognised the efforts made in the recruitment and retention of

permanent staff and states that efforts should continue to increase the proportion of permanent staff.

- 6.7 The report recognises the changes made in the Brent Police Child Protection Team duty systems and in refocusing on the primary role of investigating crimes against children. This new role needed to be clearly communicated to partner agencies to assist partnership working between police and Social Services.
- 6.8 The root and branch review carried out by the Metropolitan Police of their child protection arrangements has resulted in changes in internal governance, accountabilities and in addressing cultural issues. In Brent, this has clarified the focus of their work which will be enhanced by more resources locally.
- 6.9 Within the hospital and PCT there was a commitment to improve services to children. Information on individual children and new initiatives were communicated efficiently and effectively to clinical staff. The inspection found that the 2 hospitals within the trust, Central Middlesex Hospital and Northwick Park Hospital used different policies and procedures for child protection. This needed to be resolved as well as ensuring that children in services other than A&E or paediatrics also needed to be safeguarded if they presented with signs of abuse.
- GP's training in child protection and their attendance at child protection conferences will need to be resolved.
- 6.10 Relationships between agencies were good at a strategic level although at an operational level communication, consistency and quality of response would need to be improved. This has been recognised as factors linked to staff shortages and pressures of work across all agencies and levels of social work experience. More in-depth training on partnership working across agencies in child protection work is recommended.
- 6.11 The initial response to the recommendations was presented to the Annual Review of performance of Brent Social Services on 30 June 2003 and was well received.
- 6.12 The Social Services Action Plan (Appendix 2) sets out recommendations for Brent Area Child Protection Committee, Brent Children's Services and joint agency recommendations. The plan details action taken to date, the lead officer, the actions still to be completed and the date for completion.
- 6.13 In summary the Inter-agency Inspection of Child Protection Services in Brent of May 2003 concludes that Children's Services continues to improve and has established strong foundations for the service to continue to do so.

7.0 BACKGROUND INFORMATION

- 7.1 The Victoria Climbié Inquiry - Report, published January 2003

DoH: Home Office

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