

REPORT TO: Children & Young People Policy & Performance Board

DATE: 7 September 2009

REPORTING OFFICER: Strategic Director – Children & Young People

SUBJECT: Climbie Visits

WARD(S) Borough-wide

1.0 PURPOSE OF THE REPORT

- 1.1 To report to PPB on the conduct of and outcomes from Climbie Visits to front line Child in Need Teams.
- 1.2 To review the outcomes from the recommendations reported to PPB on 23rd February 09.

2.0 RECOMMENDATION: That

- (1) note the contents of the report;**
- (2) new and extended list of available Members is agreed by PPB and a rota of Climbe Visits agreed;**
- (3) following all Climbe Visits the report provided by Members and the responses made by relevant Managers should be reported to PPB and scrutinised twice a year; and**
- (4) the focus of Climbe Visits should give increased scrutiny to the core business of Contact, Referral and Assessment processes and performance data should routinely be discussed and understood.**

3.0 SUPPORTING INFORMATION

- 3.1 Training was provided to PPB Members on 1st June this year. This explained the purpose of both Regulation 33 visits to Children's Homes and Climbie Visits.
- 3.2 There are currently four Members identified to carry out Climbie Visits, two in Runcorn and two in Widnes. Visits are carried out quarterly and a report is then sent to the Operational Director for Specialist Services and passed to the Divisional Manager, Children in Need to respond to any issues raised.

Meeting dates have been set for the year; visits to both teams took place in March 2009 and to the Widnes team in June. A visit

scheduled for 21st July in Runcorn did not go ahead and is in the process of being re-arranged.

3.3 The purpose of the Climbe Visit is to;

- Ensure that staffing levels are appropriate
- Check that workloads of individual workers are appropriate
- Ensure that referral management processes are sound and secure
- Check on the performance of the Duty Teams
- Track the progress of implementation of Integrated Children's System (ICS)

3.4 Issues raised during visits have been predominantly around Health and Safety, working conditions for staff and Members have provided support in resolving a number of issues. There have also been issues raised in relation to the workload of Social Workers. Examples of issues and resolution have been listed below;

Issues Raised	Resolution
Workload of Social Workers	<p>Agreement for three additional social work posts across the three Children in Need Teams, (2 posts have been filled, 3rd going out to advert in September).</p> <p>Work being undertaken through Locality Pilot to develop a model across Halton for ensuring targeted and assertive earlier intervention to help reduce the number of Children and families requiring an intervention from Specialist Services.</p>
Safety in Car Park at Midwood House following a number of incidents of damage to vehicles and an assault on a staff member.	CCTV has been installed in the car park
Car Parking issues at Midwood House	Barrier installed with a key code, only staff members who are essential car users now have access to the car park.
Flu Vaccinations for front line workers	System has been put in place so that staff can claim back cost of flu vaccinations hopefully reducing sickness levels.

4.0 POLICY IMPLICATIONS

4.1 Lord Laming's Inquiry into the death of Victoria Climbe recommended that; *Chief Executives of local authorities with social services responsibilities must make arrangements for senior managers and councillors to regularly visit intake teams in their children's services department, and to report their findings to the Chief Executive and social services committee.* This recommendation remains 'best practice' and still considered as part of any Ofsted Inspection.

5.0 OTHER IMPLICATIONS

5.1 There are two issues which need to be addressed to strengthen the conduct of Climbie Visits.

5.2 Firstly there have been some difficulties engaging Members to carry out visits. Visits to the Widnes team are prioritised by the two Members involved and take place at appropriate intervals, however embedding the same process in Runcorn has proved more problematic. All Members involved in Climbie Visits must have an Enhanced CRB Disclosure.

5.3 Secondly, whilst the visits have had a very positive impact, the expectation following the Baby Peter case, is that Members have a more detailed understanding of the functions of the contact, referral and assessment processes in ensuring children are safeguarded.

6.0 IMPLICATIONS FOR THE COUNCIL'S PRIORITIES

6.1 Children & Young People in Halton

All Children in Need are subject to regulated service provision. From April 2009 there will be annual unannounced inspections of Contact, Referral and Assessment Teams. Climbie Visits afford Members an opportunity to assure themselves that front line teams are providing a standard of service that safeguards children.

6.2 Employment, Learning & Skills in Halton

If children and young people are not safeguarded from harm they will have poorer outcomes and less likely to achieve economic well being.

6.3 A Healthy Halton

If children and young people are not safeguarded from harm they will have poorer outcomes and less likely to thrive and be healthy.

6.4 A Safer Halton

The performance of the Council's children services contact, referral and assessments teams is critical to keeping the most vulnerable children and young people in the borough safe.

6.5 Halton's Urban Renewal

None

7.0 RISK ANALYSIS

7.1 If Climbe Visits are not conducted regularly and effectively, the Council will be in breach of recommendation 41 of Lord Laming's Inquiry. This will have a detrimental impact upon the rating of children services and the wider Comprehensive Area Assessment (CAA).

8.0 LIST OF BACKGROUND PAPERS UNDER SECTION 100D OF THE LOCAL GOVERNMENT ACT 1972

Document	Place of Inspection	Contact Officer
The Victoria Climbe Inquiry	Grosvenor House	Vicky Buchanan
Procedure for Undertaking Climbe Visits	Grosvenor House	Vicky Buchanan