
THE VICTORIA CLIMBIE INQUIRY

Report of the Chief Constable

1. PURPOSE OF THE REPORT

The purpose of this report is to provide members with a summary of the recommendations from Lord Laming's Inquiry into the death of Victoria Climbie and the resulting implications for the Police Service.

2. BACKGROUND

Victoria Adjo Climbie was born in the Ivory Coast on 2 November 1991. On 24 April 1999 she was brought to live in London by her Great Aunt, Therese Kouao, with the support and backing of Victoria's family, to provide her with a better education.

On 25 February 2000 Victoria was murdered at the hands of Kouao and her partner, Carl Manning. Victoria died from lung, heart and kidney failure. At the post mortem examination 128 separate injuries were noted.

Prior to her death, no less than two Housing Authorities, four Social Services Departments, two Child Protection Teams of the Metropolitan Police and a specialist centre managed by the NSPCC had known Victoria. She had also been admitted to two different hospitals because of suspected deliberate harm. Despite this, within a few months, Victoria was transformed from a healthy, lively and happy little girl, into a broken wreck.

The reality was that the services knew little or nothing more about Victoria at the end of the process than they did during the twelve key occasions when they had the opportunity to successfully intervene in her life.

As a result of Victoria's death an Inquiry Team, headed by Lord Laming was established. It was asked to keep a clear focus on the facts in order to find out what happened to Victoria, why things happened the way they did, and how such terrible events may be prevented in the future.

The report details a catalogue of administrative, managerial and professional failure. Lord Laming attributes most criticism towards senior managers and members of the organisations concerned, whose responsibility it was to ensure that the services they provided were properly staffed and able to deliver good quality services to children and families.

There is a total of 108 recommendations, eighteen have direct implications for the Police Service (Appendix A) and three have multi agency working implications (Appendix B). Each recommendation has been given a timescale for implementation.

The recommendations can be summarised into the following way:

Child Protection Working Practices

- Structural change locally and nationally (still to be decided by the Government)
- Location of Child Protection Unit Offices
- Resourcing
- Training
- IT Support

Police Protection

- Internal procedural amendment.

Quality of Service to Child Victims

- Enhanced referral between agencies. The Police must lead all criminal investigations with staff supported by supervisory involvement and in doing so, children must be dealt with in a similar manner to adults.

Recommendations 6 and 107 will be of particular interest to the Police Authority, and will need to be subject of further discussions.

The Government is also to produce a Green Paper to deal with some of the longer term issues arising from the report.

A detailed plan is being prepared which will outline the response of Northumbria Police in relation to the recommendations. This work will compliment the two year development programme undertaken by Child Protection, building upon the Best Value Review and an internal Self Inspection of Child Protection Units.

3. EQUAL OPPORTUNITIES IMPLICATIONS

The Implementation Plan will ensure compliance with the Force Equal Opportunities Policy and the Race Relations (Amendment) Act 2000.

4. HUMAN RIGHTS IMPLICATIONS

Progression of the recommendations will support article 2, right to life and article 8, right to respect for private and family life of the European Convention on Human Rights and the Human Rights Act 1998.

5. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

There are no financial implications arising from this report.

6. RECOMMENDATIONS

Members are asked to:

- i) Note the contents of this report.
- ii) Agree to receive a further report detailing the force response at a future meeting.

APPENDIX A

Below is a chart of Lord Laming's key recommendations with implications for the Police Service and the way services to support children and families are organised and managed, (arranged in order of timescale).

Recommendation No	Recommendation	Timescale
91	Save in exceptional circumstance, no child is to be taken into police protection until he/she has been seen and an assessment of his/her circumstances has been undertaken. (para 13.17)	30 April 2003
92	Chief Constables must ensure that crimes involving a child victim are dealt with promptly and efficiently, and to the same standard as equivalent crimes against adults. (para 13.24)	30 April 2003
93	Whenever a joint investigation by Police and Social Services is required into a possible injury or harm to a child, a manager from each agency should always be involved at the referral stage, and in any further strategy discussion. (para 13.52)	30 April 2003
94	In cases of serious crime against children, supervisory officers must, from the beginning, take an active role in ensuring that a proper investigation is carried out. (para 13.55)	30 April 2003
98	The guideline set out at paragraph 5.8 of Working Together must be strictly adhered to: whenever Social Services receive a referral which may constitute a criminal offence against a child, they must inform the police at the earliest opportunity. (para 14.46)	30 April 2003

Recommendation No	Recommendation	Timescale
96	Police Forces must review their systems for taking children into Police Protection and ensure they comply with the Children Act 1989 and Home Office Guidelines. In particular, they must ensure that an independent officer of at least Inspector rank acts as the Designated Officer in all cases. (para 13.68)	31 July 2003
97	Chief Constables must ensure that the investigation of crime against children is as important as the investigation of any other form of serious crime. Any suggestion that child protection policing is of a lower status than other forms of policing must be eradicated. (para 14.15)	31 July 2003
105	Chief Constables must ensure that child protection teams are fully integrated into the structure of their forces and not disadvantaged in terms of accommodation, equipment or resources. (para 15.45)	31 July 2003
106	The Home Office must ensure that Child Protection policing is included in the list of ministerial priorities for the police. (para 15.46)	31 July 2003
107	Chief Constables and Police Authorities must give Child Protection investigations a high priority in their policing plans, thereby ensuring consistently high standards of service by well resourced, well managed and well motivated teams. (para 15.46)	31 July 2003
108	The Home Office, through Centrex, must add specific training to child protection policing to the syllabus for the strategic command course. This will ensure that all future Chief Officers in the police service have adequate knowledge and understanding of the roles of Child Protection Teams. (para 15.53)	31 July 2003

Recommendation No	Recommendation	Timescale
95	The Association of Chief Police Officers must produce and implement the standards based service, as recommended by Her Majesty's Inspectorate of Constabulary in the 1999 thematic inspection report, Child Protection. (para 13.66)	31 January 2005
99	The Working Together arrangements must be amended to ensure the Police carry out completely, and exclusively, any criminal investigation elements in a case of suspected injury or harm to a child, including evidential interview with a child victim. This will remove any confusion about which agency takes the lead or is responsible for certain actions. (para 14.57)	31 January 2005
100	Training for Child Protection Officers must equip them with the confidence to question the views of professionals in other agencies, including Doctors, no matter how eminent those professionals appear to be. (para 14.73)	31 January 2005
101	The Home Office, through Her Majesty's Inspectorate of Constabulary, must take a more active role in maintaining high standards in child protection investigation by means of its regular basic Command Unit and Force inspections. In addition, a follow up to the Child Protection Thematic Inspection of 1999 should be conducted.	31 January 2005
102	The Home Office, through Centrex and the Association of Chief Police Officers, must devise and implement a national training curriculum for Child Protection officers as recommended in 1999 by Her Majesty's Inspectorate of Constabulary in its thematic inspection report, Child Protection. (para 15.16)	31 January 2005

Recommendation No	Recommendation	Timescale
103	Chief Constables must ensure that officers working on Child Protection Teams are sufficiently well trained in criminal investigation, and that there is always a substantial core of fully trained detective officers on each team to deal with the most serious inquiries. (para 14.24)	31 January 2005
104	The Police Information Technology Organisation (PITO) should evaluate the child protection IT system currently available, and make recommendations to Chief Constables, who must ensure their Police Force has in use an effective Child Protection database and IT management system. (para 15.40)	31 January 2005

APPENDIX B

Below is a chart of Lord Laming's key recommendations with implications for the Police Service in relation to multi agency working.

Recommendation No	Recommendation	Timescale
6	Each Local Authority with Social Services responsibilities must establish a Committee of Members for Children & Families with lay members drawn from the management committees of each of the key services ie Police Authority, Local Authority, Health trusts. (para 17.97)	31 July 2003
7	The Local Authority Chief Executive should chair a Management Board for services to Children & Families which will report to the Member Committee referred to at Recommendation 6. (para 17.97)	31 July 2003
9	The budget contributed by each of the local agencies in support of vulnerable children & families should be identified by the Management Board for Services to Children & Families. (para 17.97)	31 July 2003

