

**THE VICTORIA CLIMBIE INQUIRY****Report of the Chief Constable**

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**1 PURPOSE OF THE REPORT**

The purpose of this report is to provide members with a further update in relation to the progress of Northumbria Police in implementing the recommendations from Lord Laming's inquiry into the death of Victoria Climbie.

**2 BACKGROUND**

At the Police Authority meetings held on 26 March and 25 June 2003, members received reports on the 108 recommendations from Lord Laming's Inquiry and agreed to receive further reports detailing the force response to it. (Minute Nos 266 - 2002/3 and 47 - 2003/4 refer).

Victoria was murdered on 25 February 2000 by her great aunt and partner, and the post mortem examination revealed 128 separate injuries.

As a result an Inquiry Team headed by Lord Laming was established and 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 could be prevented in the future.

Of the 108 resulting recommendations, 18 had direct implications for the Police Service (Appendix A) and 4 had multi agency working implications. (Appendix B).

Each recommendation has been given a timescale for implementation, and the force progress to date in implementing them is shown.

Her Majesty's Inspectorate of Constabulary conducted an evaluation of forces' self audits of the five police recommendations to be implemented by April 2003. They concluded that all five had been complied with fully, and gave the force five green lights out of five for recommendations 91, 92, 93, 94 and 98.

This work complements the 24 month development programme undertaken by Child Protection, building upon the Northumbria Police Best Value Review and an internal Self Inspection of Child Protection Units (CPUs).

**3 EQUAL OPPORTUNITIES IMPLICATIONS**

The Implementation Plan will ensure compliance with existing Force Equal Opportunity Policies and the Race Relations Amendment Act.

#### **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.

#### **5 FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS**

There are no financial implications directly arising from the contents of this report.

#### **6 RECOMMENDATIONS**

Members are asked to:

- i) Note the content of this report which highlights the progress made by Northumbria Police against the implementation timescales outlined by Lord Laming in his report.
- ii) Agree to receive further progress reports as appropriate.

**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 .

<b>No</b>	<b>Recommendation</b>	<b>Implementation Date</b>	<b>Progress Update</b>
<b>91</b>	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	Force policy and procedures have been amended to cater for the requirement for a child to be seen and an assessment carried out prior to taking children into police protection, except in exceptional circumstances.
<b>92</b>	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	All staff have been instructed of the requirement to deal with child victims promptly and efficiently.
<b>93</b>	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	Within CPU, where a joint investigation is required, a manager is involved at the referral stage and also in further strategy discussions.

No	Recommendation	Implementation Date	Progress Update
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	For all cases of Serious Category Crime (SCC), supervisory officers will manage the investigation process. This is monitored via the completion of SCC booklets and is audited on a monthly basis using the CPU Audit Manual.
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	A letter has been forwarded to: Chief Executive, Head of Children's Services, Area Child Protection Committee Chair and Child Protection Co-ordinator for each of the 6 Local Authority areas within the Northumbria Police area highlighting this requirement.
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	Northumbria Police has adopted appropriate changes in policy and procedures in order to comply with this recommendation. All Inspectors have received instruction concerning their new roles as Designated Officers, and the effectiveness of this instruction is currently being reviewed by the Personnel Department.
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	The Chief Constable has provided continuous support to Child Protection working. A Best Value Review has been conducted and an evaluation of this has been completed. The HMIC Best Value Inspection report concluded that the Force's Child Protection and Domestic Violence service was GOOD. HMIC concluded that the force's prospects for improvement in these areas were UNCERTAIN, but this was always likely as the inspection was undertaken before the Best Value pilot had been completed or evaluated.

No	Recommendation	Implementation Date	Progress Update
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	All Child Protection accommodation was reviewed in 2002 ensuring Child Protection teams were suitably located within mainstream police stations. Equipment levels were reviewed. Recommendations have been submitted to the Public Service and Performance Review as to how Child Protection may best fit into the new force structure.
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	<p>Child Protection does not feature within the Government's key priorities for the police. However, within the National Policing Plan 2004-2007, specific mention is made of Child Protection at para 5.2 to 5.4, namely:</p> <p style="text-align: center;">5.2</p> <p>The Government believes that Child Protection should be sufficiently resourced by police forces and authorities to ensure that actions devoted to safeguarding children can be maintained at a high level. This includes action against paedophile crime and child abuse. The Government strongly supports the spread of best practice in dealing with these issues and expects all forces and authorities to give Child Protection prominence in their local, annual and strategic policing plans and to co-operate with other agencies.</p> <p style="text-align: center;">5.3</p> <p>This is an ongoing responsibility for the police service, which sits alongside its responsibilities for the investigation of serious, violent and sexual offences. The Association of Chief Police Officers is working towards the introduction of minimum standards and, once available, these should be implemented in all forces.</p> <p style="text-align: center;">5.4</p> <p>Police forces should also take action to ensure that the mistakes made in the Victoria Climbié case will not be repeated. The work on implementing the recommendations in Lord Laming's report and the proposals in the Government's Green Paper 'Every Child Matters', should be led by senior officers and reflected in forces and authorities local and annual policing plans.</p>

<b>No</b>	<b>Recommendation</b>	<b>Implementation Date</b>	<b>Progress Update</b>
<b>107</b>	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	Child Protection working is included within the Northumbria Police Authority and Northumbria Police Strategic Plan 2003-2005, in the form of two pertinent key milestones. These are, to review the role, remit, location and status of the Force Child Protection Units in the light of the report on 'arrangements for safeguarding children' and also to implement, where appropriate, the recommendations from the Victoria Climbié Inquiry.
<b>108</b>	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	Training for the strategic command course is currently under review.
<b>95</b>	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	The Association of Chief Police Officers has prepared draft guidance which is currently out for consultation. It is intended that the Home Secretary and Association of Chief Police Officers will sign off the final draft in April 2004.

No	Recommendation	Implementation Date	Progress Update
99	<p>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 the 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)</p>	31 January 2005	<p>This recommendation has only been accepted in principle by the Government. The Government's response to this recommendation is that the revision of the Children's Act guidance will include two volumes of core guidance accompanied by additional supplementaries. This guidance will cover organisational responsibility but interviewing must be consistent with the existing Government guidance, 'Achieving Best Evidence'.</p> <p>At local level, Local Authorities have been informed that social workers will no longer be trained to conduct the video interviewing of children subject to criminal offences. Henceforth, such interviews will be conducted completely and exclusively by police officers. Work will commence training partners in the role they can perform in the joint planning of such interviews.</p>
100	<p>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)</p>	31 January 2005	<p>A bespoke Child Protection training course has been prepared and delivered to all Northumbria Police Child Protection staff who had yet to be trained, and also those who had been selected for forthcoming Child Protection Unit vacancies.</p>
101	<p>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. (para 14.32)</p>	31 January 2005	<p>The Government has only accepted this recommendation in part. Her Majesty's Inspectorate of Constabulary has decided that it would not be appropriate to incorporate child protection into Basic Command Unit inspections because the inspection teams lack the necessary expertise, and because the focus of these inspections is on leadership and generic performance, and not specific functions. The Inspectorate has decided to carry out a formal re-inspection to review progress on the findings of both the 1999 thematic inspection and the Victoria Climbié Inquiry report.</p>

No	Recommendation	Implementation Date	Progress Update
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	From 2003, Child Protection will be an explicit part of police probationer training. Centrex will send out a package for in-service training and the Home Office will work with police forces to encourage its implementation in all forces. The standards to which police officers should be trained in Child Protection have now been set, and Centrex will develop an accredited training programme based on these standards, for all police staff involved in Child Protection issues. This will be implemented by January 2005.
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	On a national scale, a police working group has agreed that Child Protection teams should be staffed by trained Detectives by the end of 2005. However, in Northumbria Police all Child Protection Officers are Detective Constables already. The vast majority are full trained detectives, with a few remaining who have only received a Foundation Course. All officers accepted for roles in Child Protection Units have received at least Foundation Detective training.
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	The Police Information Technology Organisation is currently analysing and evaluating Child Protection IT systems in use by police forces in England and Wales. Following this, a decision will be made by ACPO as to whether there should be a national police Child Protection IT system, taking into account the needs of partner agencies. This decision will also have to be made in the light of the Information Referral and Tracking (IRT) initiative, which is currently being piloted nationally, with one of the trailblazer sites being a joint Newcastle-Gateshead project.

## APPENDIX B

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

No	Recommendation	Implementation Date	Progress Update
21	When a professional makes a referral to Social Services concerning the well-being of a child, the fact of that referral must be confirmed in writing by the referrer within 48 hours.(para 4.59)	30 April 2003	Referrals to the Social Services by the Police are made in writing as a matter of course, as Notification of Child Concern forms are sent by fax to Social Services Departments at the earliest opportunity. In the event that the matter is too urgent to be dealt with in this manner, the faxed form always follows on from the telephone contact at the earliest practical opportunity, and in any event within 48 hours.
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 i.e. Police Authority, Local Authority, Health Trusts. (para 17.97)	31 July 2003	The Green Paper, 'Every Child Matters', sets out proposals for every Local Authority to have a lead member for children and also a Director of Children's Services. The introduction of Children's Trusts to integrate education, health and social care services will co-ordinate interagency provision of services.
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	Reformed and strengthened Area Child Protection Committees, to be called Local Safeguarding Children Boards , will be established on a statutory basis, with all the key agencies represented and having a duty to co-operate.
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	The Government accepts this recommendation in principle. They observe that the pooling of budgets following the introduction of Children's Trusts will facilitate flexibility of staff and resources in the provision of services covering education, health and social care.