



BABY P – GOVERNMENT RESPONSE

Yesterday Children's secretary Ed Balls announced that Sharon Shoesmith, the DCS, had been removed from her post with immediate effect after an independent report had painted a "devastating and damning" picture of failings in the north London local authority's systems. Two Haringey councillors, council leader George Meehan and cabinet member for children and young people Liz Santry, also resigned shortly before Ed Balls' statement on the findings of the independent report.

The shortcomings included:

- Failure to identify children at immediate risk of harm and to act on evidence. This included a failure to talk to children believed to be at risk
- Agencies acting in isolation from one another without effective co-ordination
- Poor gathering, recording and sharing of information
- Insufficient supervision by senior management
- Insufficient challenge by the Safeguarding Children Board to council members and frontline staff
- Over-dependence on performance data which was not always accurate
- Poor child protection plans

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- Failure to implement the recommendations of the Victoria Climbié inquiry, which heavily criticised it five years ago.

The action announced by the Ed Balls included:

- Removing Sharon Shoemith from her post as Director of Children's Services
- John Coughlan, Director of Children's Services, from Hampshire County Council to cover her role while the Department for Children, Schools and Families finds a permanent replacement in Jan 09 under section 497A (4B) of the Education Act 1996.
- Mr Coughlan is also to carry out an internal review of social work staff in Haringey
- Haringey to appoint a new and independent chair of its Local Safeguarding Children Board under Section 7A of the Local Authority Social Services Act 1970. Graham Badman, former Director of Children's Services in Kent, and KSCB Chair, has been appointed for this and will take up the post this week and will carry out a new serious case review into Baby P. The original review was judged to be inadequate as some of the reports on which it was based lacked rigour". Graham will submit the new serious case review to Ofsted by the end of February for evaluation and he will publish the executive summary of the new serious case review - which must provide a full and comprehensive and fair summary of the confidential serious case review - by the end of March. The new serious case review will require the commissioning of new management reports from and the cooperation of all agencies involved in child protection in Haringey, and all agencies must also now implement the wider recommendations made in the inspector's report.
- The education and children's services watchdog Ofsted to carry out unannounced annual inspections of children's services across the country
- More action to be taken at those authorities in England which have had "inadequate" serious case reviews to show they have made improvements. (All of the SCR's in Kent judged by Ofsted to date have had a higher scoring than this, so this will not apply to KSCB)
- The Healthcare Commission will undertake an analysis of whether national child protection standards are being applied as vigorously as they should be, while the Chief Executive of the NHS will also ask all NHS organisations to review their child protection arrangements.

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Additionally, Lord Laming yesterday wrote to Ed Balls stating that he believed that a public inquiry would be unhelpful and that "working together 2006" should be revised particularly in regard to serious case reviews (SCR's). Laming outlines that 3 practice issues should be regarded as fundamental principles, namely:

- 1) SCR's must be chaired by someone independent of the reporting agencies
- 2) The Chair must have access to all relevant documents and witnesses (this may require legislative changes)
- 3) Executive Summary must be produced for publication that reflects a fair summary of the report

Further information:

[Haringey Joint Area Review](#)

[Ed Balls' letter to Ofsted](#)

[Ed Balls' letter to Directors of Children's Services](#)

[Lord Laming letter to Ed Balls](#)

[Ed Balls' Press Statement in Full](#)