

<b>MEETING:</b>	<b>OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE</b>
<b>DATE:</b>	<b>TUESDAY 6 FEBRUARY 2018</b>
<b>SUBJECT:</b>	<b>UPDATE ON ACTIONS FOLLOWING NEWSAM REPORT</b>
<b>REPORT AUTHOR</b>	<b>KAREN DOLTON, INTERIM EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR OF CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE</b>

**SUMMARY: This report summarises the actions taken in relation to safeguarding and adoption procedures following the findings of Malcolm Newsam CBE**

## **1.0 INTRODUCTION**

On 20 July 2017 an Extraordinary meeting of Council was held to consider the contents of the report of Malcolm Newsam CBE following his investigation into the actions of both Members and Officers of the Council surrounding safeguarding issues

The meeting resolved that the Executive Director of Children, Young People and Culture should implement any outstanding recommendations of Malcolm Newsam in relation to safeguarding and adoption procedures. This report provides details of the actions taken in relation to these matters.

From an operational perspective, the Acting Executive Director is satisfied that the failings highlighted in the Newsam report are not indicative of a wider or systemic problem. These failings occurred in 2015. Since then, between 22 February and 17 March 2016, there was a very thorough inspection undertaken by Ofsted (involving 8 inspectors and a Senior Inspector) of Bury's services for children in need of help and protection, children looked after and care leavers. Bury was judged to be good for safeguarding children and judged as having a good adoption service. This judgement was made after thorough examination and auditing of a number of children's case files and extensive scrutiny of performance information and policies procedures. In addition, a wide number of staff, partners, children and families were interviewed to ensure that information could be verified.

In addition, following this investigation, a number of additional measures have been implemented to give assurance that practice is of good quality and compliant with procedures. In March 2017, we launched a new

quality assurance framework which requires monthly auditing by team managers and strategic leads of a number of randomly selected children's files. Each file audited is given a judgement (Inadequate, Require Improvement, Good or Outstanding) and remedial actions are followed up to ensure that practice improves. In order to make this process as robust as possible, we have also employed an interim practice improvement manager. Since her arrival in November, the quality and pace of auditing has improved further and positively impacted on the quality of practice. She has audited approximately 100 files since November and she has not had to escalate any safeguarding matters.

The Executive Director has met with the Senior HMI separately in February to give the information regarding the circumstances leading to the investigation. In addition, the Director met with them again in March and July to keep them updated about the events. In addition, there have been 2 meetings in (July and October) with the Ofsted Regional Director and his team of HMIs for the "annual conversation" meetings where they scrutinise our performance and ask challenging questions about our situation.

## **Recommendations relating to safeguarding and adoption**

### **1) Council to publicise and reinforce the role of the LADO**

The role of the LADO is well understood in Bury. The investigation did not reveal any ignorance of this role but rather a choice not to involve the LADO appropriately. The strategic leads have emphasised the role of the LADO at a number of meetings with staff and most recently attended a team managers meeting in October to again remind staff of the role.

The role of the LADO has been discussed at the Senior Leadership team meeting on 21 August and there are plans for a further discussion in January.

In addition, the LADO has done a presentation with several councillors in December.

The role of the LADO in relation to adopters has been updated and can be found in our online procedures at:

[http://www.proceduresonline.com/bury/cs/chapters/p\\_alleg\\_against\\_adopt.html?zoom\\_highlight=LADO](http://www.proceduresonline.com/bury/cs/chapters/p_alleg_against_adopt.html?zoom_highlight=LADO)

### **2) Council to ensure all staff are aware of the regulatory role of Ofsted**

The adoption procedures have been updated to reflect the content of the regulations, as follows:

Any person who receives information or suspects that a child has suffered or is suffering harm in an adoptive placement or during an introduction to an adoptive placement must immediately inform the child's social worker.

On receipt of any such information, the child's social worker or their team manager must immediately:

- Inform his or her line manager;
- Inform the prospective adopter's link worker and his or her manager in writing;
- Inform the **Local Authority Designated Officer (LADO)** and the **Designated Senior Manager** in writing within 24 hours
- Make a decision as to whether the matter should be immediately treated as a child protection matter and a Section 47 **Strategy Meeting** convened chaired by the Social Work team (see **Section 3.2, Section 47 Strategy Meeting**);
- Where there are concerns about standards of care, consideration should also be given to the convening of an urgent Placement Planning Review Meeting - see **Placement for Adoption Procedure** - or an urgent review of the adoptive placement should be considered - see **Adoption Reviews Procedure**.

N.B. If there are serious and/or multiple referrals about standards of care, it may still be appropriate to refer the matter for a Section 47 Strategy Meeting for a full investigation.

The prospective adopter's link worker will:

- Inform the designated allegations manager within the Adoption Service - see **Section 2, Introduction**; and, in consultation with the designated allegations manager:
- Inform the social workers for any other child in the placement;
- Inform any other local authority with an interest in the adoptive placement;
- Provide support to the prospective adopter.

Where it is appropriate to treat the allegation/suspicion as a child protection concern, the child's social worker will be responsible for initiating the Local Safeguarding Children Board's Inter Agency Procedures in relation to the allegation/suspicion. If the child lives in another local authority area, the social worker will make a referral to the relevant local authority and that local authority will be responsible for leading the Strategy Meeting and investigation, although should involve the child's social worker and the prospective adopters' link worker fully in the process. They will gather relevant background information and convene a Section 47 Strategy Meeting within 2 working days of the referral if there is reasonable suspicion of **Significant Harm** and invite the child's social worker and adopters' link worker to the Strategy Meeting. If the threshold for Significant Harm is not met, a decision will be made by the **LADO** as to

whether the threshold is met to hold a separate **LADO** Initial Consideration Meeting, chaired by the **LADO** - see **Section 3.3, LADO Initial Consideration**

Any action to protect the child in question or any other children in need of protection should not be delayed because of the Strategy Meeting.

**Prior to the Strategy Meeting, the prospective adopter's link worker should notify the Regulatory Authority of the allegation/suspicion and invite them to be represented at the Strategy Meeting.**

All staff are now aware of this requirement and our auditing process is used to check compliance with it.

**3) Council to immediately ensure a conflict of interest assessment is undertaken on all councillors and employees who come to the attention of children's social care**

The main policy change related to the Council acting as Adoption Agency where a member of staff or councillor was the applicant, and the necessary policy changes have been put in place. These can be found at: [http://www.proceduresonline.com/bury/cs/chapters/p\\_assess\\_approval.html](http://www.proceduresonline.com/bury/cs/chapters/p_assess_approval.html)

**Contact Details:**

**Karen Dolton**  
**Interim Executive Director**  
**Children, Young People and Culture**  
**Tel: 0161 253 5501**  
**E-mail: k.dolton@bury.gov.uk**