

TOUGH NEW MEASURES PUT IN PLACE FOR BETTER CARE

New body launched to protect children

SIGN UP: Director of social services, Kath Tunstall, inset, at the launch with the help of Beckfoot school pupils



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T&A Reporter

A powerful new board has been formed to protect children in Bradford.

It features many of the district's top public and voluntary sector bosses who have been given the task of ensuring children across the district feel secure, well cared-for and able to reach their full potential.

The Bradford Safeguarding Children Board (BSCB) was officially launched at Bingley's Beckfoot School yesterday.

Under legislation brought in as part of the Children Act 2004, local authorities across the country must bring public and voluntary agency bosses together to work to protect children and young people.

Bosses from bodies including Bradford Council, Education Bradford, Bradford District Voluntary Sector, Airedale NHS Trust and the Bradford office of the West Yorkshire Probation service all signed a "statement of intent" promising to work to "reduce all the kinds of harm that children can suffer, including abuse, avoidable injuries and deaths".

The BSCB will replace Bradford's former area child

STATEMENT OF INTENT

The Bradford Safeguarding Children Board (BSCB) will:

- work towards keeping children in Bradford, under the age of 18 years, safe from harm. Will strive to make sure that every child in Bradford feels secure, well cared for, and able to reach their full potential. Will support all staff to help families and carers achieve this.
- make sure that all people who work with children, and their families and carers, know how important it is to keep all children in Bradford safe.
- help all staff and professionals to work

together and know the rules about keeping children safe. They will understand the importance of listening to children, especially when children are worried about themselves or others.

- work to reduce all the kinds of harm that children can suffer, including abuse, avoidable injuries and deaths.
- seek the views of children and the people who care for them in order for Bradford to become a place where all children are safe and valued.

protection committee, but it has greater powers and responsibilities.

Speaking at the launch, Kath Tunstall, the Council's director of social services, who is chairman of the board, said: "The strengthening of the current arrangements to safeguard children is a significant step in fulfilling our commitment to improving the outcomes for all children growing up in the district."

Mrs Tunstall said children's boards across the country had been introduced in the wake of scathing criticisms made after the death of eight-year-old Victoria Climbié. Victoria died in February 2000 in London after being tortured to death by her great-aunt and her boyfriend.

An inquiry into Victoria's

death, led by former chief inspector of social services, Lord Laming, was highly critical of the role of a host of public bodies involved in her case including the police, medical authorities and social services.

Mrs Tunstall said: "The report highlighted considerable evidence that some agencies were not giving sufficient consideration to child protection issues, giving sufficient training or vetting staff properly."

"The Children Act 2004 stated that improvements needed to be made.

"The BSCB is all about assisting parents and carers in the very difficult task of bringing up children."

The new board will feature improved assessment procedures, including a child death overview panel which

will investigate the death of every child in unusual circumstances, including accidents, throughout the Bradford district.

There are about 100 such incidents each year.

The BSCB has four key responsibilities it must adhere to: ensuring that children are safe from maltreatment, neglect, violence and sexual exploitation; that they are secure, stable and well cared-for; are safe from injury and death and that parents, carers and families provide a safe environment.

During the launch, pupils at Beckfoot School performed a short drama production on teenage suicide alongside a performance from the school's Senior Hand Chime Group.

Mrs Tunstall said: "We are delighted that Beckfoot School has helped with the launch as it emphasises, as a strategic partnership, our commitment to keep in touch with real issues affecting children's lives."

The board, which was meeting today at Bradford's Leeds Road Hospital, will continue to do promotional work, train various agencies on keeping children safe, develop inter-agency policies for safeguarding children and review child protection cases.

Public bodies have each pledged total funding of about £250,000 for the next three years to sustain its work.

Board members also include representatives from social services, education, the early years and youth service and youth offending teams and the NSPCC.

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Tragedy that sparked review

A public inquiry into the death of Victoria Climbié, right, called for radical reforms of child protection services in England and led to the Government introducing the Children's Act 2004.

The eight-year-old died in February 2000 from abuse and neglect while living with her aunt Marie-Therese Kouao and her boyfriend Carl Manning in London.

Victoria was seen by dozens of social workers, nurses, doctors and police officers before she died but all failed to spot and



stop the abuse as she was slowly tortured to death.

It triggered a wide-ranging inquiry headed by Lord Laming, who described it as the worst case of neglect he had heard of.

His year-long public inquiry identified social services departments at four London boroughs, two police forces, two hospitals, and a specialist children's unit who all failed to act when presented with evidence of abuse.

Lord Laming said the greatest failure lay with senior managers and those in charge of staffing and financing these services.

His subsequent report called for better co-ordination between groups responsible for child protection throughout the UK.