

Laming slams child protection services

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Lord Laming has delivered a damning indictment of the state of child-protection services in England.

[His report](#), commissioned by Children's Secretary Ed Balls after the fallout from the death of 17-month-old Baby P in Haringey, today criticises poor inspection and calls on social workers to be better trained.

His report said: "Inspection processes have not been as effective as scrutinising practices in safeguarding as in education." It added that "performance indicators in use for safeguarding children are inadequate for this task".

Laming said he was surprised that trainee social workers can go through their whole degree without any practical experience and start their first day as a social worker with a full caseload. He called for a post-graduate qualification in social work to be introduced.

Other key findings are:

- * A National Safeguarding Delivery Unit, which the government should establish to "inject greater energy, drive and ambition to ensure the implementation of change to support local improvement"
- * Ofsted should revise inspection and improve how it checks whether schools fulfil their responsibility for child protection
- * Foreign social workers "should be trained in the legislation and policy of this country before being allowed to practice"
- * Local IT systems that support the use of the Integrated Children's System are "hampering progress"
- * Accident and emergency staff and other health workers continue to have concerns about sharing data, and that needs to be addressed
- * The Home Office should take national action to ensure that police child protection teams are well-resourced
- * The Ministry of Justice should reduce the length of time it takes to complete court proceedings when a child is taken into care.
- * The government must also establish an "immediate and independent" review into court fees, and if these are found to act as a deterrent they should be abolished by 2010/11

* Less than 10 per cent of local authorities chose to adopt national targets on child protection.