Implications of Laming 2 for protecting the most vulnerable children

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Signpost

- Introduction
- Baby Peter – timeline
- Implications
- Will vulnerable children be protected?
- Conclusions

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Baby P – time line

1 March 2006	Baby Peter born
Nov 2006	Mother's boyfriend moves in; Police/Social services not told
Dec 2006	GP spots bruises on Baby Peter
	Presented at hospital; head injury/bruising
	In hospital for 4 days
	Mother arrested
	Placed in temporary care with family friend
	Subject to a child protection plan
January 2007	Returned to his mother

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Baby P – Timeline - 2

April 2007	Admitted to hospital; swelling and bruises to his head. Mother claims he fell on marble fireplace. Episode not reported to the police
June 2007	Marks seen on baby's face by social worker; he is sent to hospital; mother re-arrested; family friend paid to live at house for 2 weeks; childminder during day
30 July 2007	Social worker misses bruises; chocolate smeared face
1 Aug 2007	Paediatrician defers development assessment and misses broken back and ribs despite crying in pain
2 Aug 2007	Mother told at SSD office she won't be prosecuted
3 Aug 2007	Baby Peter dies aged 17 months

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Summary

- Baby Peter on the register
- 50 injuries
- Post mortem: broken spine, eight fractured ribs, lacerations to head and body
- Seen by authorities 78 times
- 35 visits to the NHS

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Public outrage

- Public outrage immediate and extreme
- Unanticipated by government and professionals
- *Sun* one million petition to Prime Minister calls for sackings, including DCS
- 500 groups created on Facebook, involving 1m+
- Independent review by Lord Laming

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Helping to shape the Laming and government response

- Written submission to Lord Laming
- Oral submission through seminar
- Submissions to government
- 30,000 supporters campaign with NSPCC on reform of the child protection system

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Implications

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Reinstatement of child protection

- *Every Child Matters* agenda, law and guidance is essentially sound BUT

  "While improvements in services for children and families, in general are welcome, it is clear that the need to protect children and young people from significant harm and neglect is ever more challenging. There now needs to be a step change in arrangements to protect children from harm" (Lord Laming)

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- **Vulnerability and the scale of need**

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The scale of need

- 60,000 children looked after by LAs
- 37,000 children subject of care orders
- 29,000 children with child protection plans
- 200,000 live in household with known domestic violence and violence
- 450,000 with mental health problems
- 250-300,000 children with parents with drug problems
- 55 children killed by parents or someone known to the child

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- **Government response**

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Proposals to strengthen child protection

- Secretaries of state to set explicit priorities for the protection of children and reflect these in frontline services
- Leadership – nationally and locally
- Accountability
- National Safeguarding Delivery Unit to report to Cabinet Sub Committee
- Regular review of referral points

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- DSCs without direct experience of safeguarding and child protection to appoint senior manager
- Revisions to *Working Together* on referrals and assessment
- Frontline staff
- Social worker recruitment and retention
- Health visiting strategy; recruitment; HV's role in child protection of 0-5s to be prioritised
- Share learning
- Resources

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The protection of children in England: action plan

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The action plan

- To “ensure every child gets the protection they deserve”
- Commitment to greater openness
- Public scrutiny of local child protection arrangements
- Investment in training and support of social workers
- Driven by cross-Government delivery unit along-side Chief Adviser on Safety of children

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Concerns to be addressed

Will vulnerable children be protected?

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Resources

"The DCSF must sufficiently resource children's services to ensure that early intervention and preventative services have the capacity to respond to all children and families identified as vulnerable or *in need*." (Lord Laming)

Government has not ringfenced resources

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Maintaining a child focus - really listening to the child including young children

- Relationships with parents and carers
- BUT there is a need to maintain the focus on the child
- Parents/carers can be manipulative

"(Professionals) need to be able to notice signs of distress in children of all ages, but particularly very young children who cannot voice concerns and for whom bed wetting, head banging and other signs may be a cry for help."

Lord Laming

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Equal protection

- The law is confusing
- Children should have equal protection from assault as adults
- Physical punishment is often a feature in cases of serious physical abuse
- Professionals should take a lead

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Child protection is everyone's responsibility

Barriers exist to adults taking action:

- Unsure abuse happening
- Not my responsibility
- Fear of damaging adult relationships
- Fear of personal consequences
- Fear of ruining a life/a family
- What do child protection agencies do?
- Fear of making things worse for the child

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Implications of a new Conservative administration

- Stated commitment to full publication of SCRs
- Bonfire of Quangos – potential abolition of National Safeguarding delivery unit
- Scrapping contact point
- Cuts to public service expenditure

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